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Frameworks of Recovery: Exploring the Intersection of Policy & Decision-Making After Hurricane Katrina

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Urban Studies
Urban Affairs

by

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
List of Figures	vii
Abstract	viii
Theoretical Perspectives	8
A Brief Overview of Marxist Philosophy	8
History & Origin of Critical Theory	10
Feminist Standpoint Theory	13
Critical Race Theory	15
Theory of Intersectionality	22
Theory Applied	26
Theorizing about Disaster: From Normative to Social Vulnerability Frameworks	28
Literature Review	37
Unequal Impact of Hurricane Katrina	49
A Gap in the Literature	59
Research Design	61
Research Questions	61
Research Design: A Qualitative Case Study	61
Methods	64
Sampling	66
Data	68
Commitments to Participants	70
Case 1 Descriptions: Participants that Returned to New Orleans	71
Case 2 Descriptions: Participants that Stayed Displaced in Houston	74
Case 3 Descriptions: Participants that Relocated to Houston after Returning to New Orleans	79
Content Analysis Data	82
Analysis	84
Validity	87
Reliability	88
Role of the Researcher	89
Alternative Research Design	89
Planning as a Barrier	93
A Flawed Planning Process	94
Limited resident participation in recovery planning	94

City politics & multiple planning processes.	97
Too slow to produce a recovery plan.....	102
Recovery Goals: An Opportunity for Return Change.....	106
Barriers to Recovery Planning: Justifying a Flawed Planning Process	109
Summary	117
Recovery Policy Compounds Vulnerability	119
Vulnerable Ever After: The Sampled Media's Portrayal of Vulnerability.....	120
Housing: A Diverse Set of Issues for a Diverse Set of Residents	122
Homeowners: “Road to anywhere but home”.	122
Renters: “On your own”.....	131
Public Housing Residents: “In Storage”	137
Education Policy: Segregated Experiments	143
Healthcare Policy: Limited Access for All	149
Summary	154
Opportunity Knocks: The Pushes and Pulls of Place.....	156
“There’s no place like home”: Pulled to New Orleans	158
“You can’t go home again”: Pushed from New Orleans	165
Policy as a barrier to return.	176
The Land of Opportunity: Pulled to Settle in Houston	188
Culture Shock: Pushed from Houston.....	197
Summary	207
Analysis.....	208
Cross Case Analysis: Race, Class, and the Absence of Gender in Recovery	210
Theory Connections	219
Literature Connections & Answers to the Research Questions	224
Conclusion	233
Media and African American Frameworks of Recovery	233
Time, Place, & Human Agency in Recovery.....	237
Competing Narratives of Recovery	238
Policy Implications for Disaster Recovery in Urban Areas.....	241
Limitations	243
Future Research	245
References.....	247
Content Analysis References	259

Appendix.....	262
Institutional Review Board Approval	262
Informed Consent Agreement.....	263
Compensation Form.....	265
2011-2012 Interview Schedules.....	266
Follow-up Interview Schedule	269
Vita.....	271

List of Figures

Figure 1: Number of Recovery Outcome Quotes by Inductive Code per Sample.....	119
Figure 2: Pushes & Pulls of Place.....	158
Figure 3: Relationship Between Content Analysis Deductive Codes.....	208

Abstract

This study seeks to understand how local and national newspaper articles and African American residents frame obstacles to returning to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. It explores how recovery planning processes and policy changes influenced the decision-making processes of African Americans displaced to Houston through a content analysis of the media and qualitative interviews with displaced and returned residents. The study shows the media and participants framed disaster recovery policies as creating opportunities and gaps in assistance that varied by location. Participants described how policy decisions that created gaps in assistance compounded the difficulty of returning for working- and middle-class African Americans. The findings suggest planners and policy makers need to consider how disaster recovery policy changes may intersect to create obstacles that impede residents' ability to return and rebuild after disasters.

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Key Words: disaster management; African Americans; decision-making processes; urban planning and policy; race, class, and gender inequality; New Orleans recovery; displacement

“The struggle by Black people to obtain freedom, justice, and dignity is as old as this nation. At times, great and inspiring leaders rose out of desperate situations to give confidence and feelings of empowerment to the Black community. Most of these leaders urged their people to strive for racial equality. They were firmly wedded to the idea that the courts and judiciary were the vehicle to better the social position of Blacks. In spite of dramatic civil rights movements and periodic victories in the legislatures, **Black Americans by no means are equal to whites**” (Bell, 1992/1995, p. 302, emphasis added).

Twenty-five years later, Bell’s words continue to ring true for people of color in the United States. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina showed the world the danger racial inequality presented for New Orleans’s African American community, especially for those that were poor, elderly, or female. Over a decade later, the recovery of the city exemplifies the persistence of racial inequality within American society as many displaced and returned African American residents continue to struggle to place Hurricane Katrina into the past.

Homes, businesses, schools, and hospitals in eighty percent of New Orleans flooded when the levees failed after Hurricane Katrina. Social institutions and support networks washed away as neoliberal recovery strategies reshaped housing, employment, education, and healthcare policies in post-Katrina New Orleans (Gotham, 2014; 2015; Tierney, 2015). Neoliberal ideologies favor decreased government regulation and oversight, individual versus collective rights, privatization of public resources through public-private partnerships, and decentralized power structures, which emphasize local control (Brash, 2011; Gotham, 2015; Hackworth, 2007; Harvey, 2005). While scholars such as Hackworth (2007) and Brash (2011) indicate that neoliberal policies benefit the upper levels of society more so than other segments, Harvey (2005) characterizes neoliberalism as conscious class warfare in response to the Keynesian welfare state that emerged after the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Following Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans's leadership implemented policies that affected multiple aspects of life (Gotham, 2014; 2015; Tierney, 2015). The city privatized public housing as well as public education. Although developments such as Lafitte and Iberville received relatively minor damages, the City Council voted to demolish all public housing developments in New Orleans two years after the storm. All but four public schools became charter schools run by private boards or the Recovery School District, with many schools not slated to open until 2015. Charity Hospital closed permanently when city officials decided to construct a medical district elsewhere. Not all decisions were local. The federal government chose to revoke policies that required companies with federal contracts to pay workers prevailing wages and that ensured minority contractors received an equitable share of government contracts. The city enacted these changes although many residents, scholars, and activists questioned the impact these policies would have on Katrina's most vulnerable victims.

A Congressional Research Service Report for Congress on the human impact of Hurricane Katrina identified poor, elderly, and African American residents of New Orleans as the most affected by Hurricane Katrina across the Gulf Coast (Cutter & Emrich, 2006; Gabe, Falk, McCarty, & Mason, 2005). African Americans made up seventy-three to eighty percent of the population in flood-affected areas although the city's population was only sixty-seven percent African American (Brookings Institution, 2005; Gabe et al., 2005). Gabe et al. (2005) reported thirty-four percent of African Americans displaced by Hurricane Katrina lived in poverty before the disaster. Media reporters found a lack of data on displaced residents initially after the disaster and over time (Mekelburg, 2015; Patterson, 2011; Rocheleau, 2017; Turner 2015). Reports estimated the flooding displaced 150,000 to 250,000 New Orleans residents to Houston of which an estimated 90,000 to 40,000 remain (Mekelburg, 2015; Morris, 2016; Patterson, 2011;

Rocheleau, 2017; Turner 2015). Drawing upon Harvey's (2005) contention that neoliberalism represents conscious class warfare, this study seeks to understand how post-disaster policy changes influenced the recovery trajectory of African Americans displaced from New Orleans by flooding and how African Americans created new networks and strategies to survive.

Different theoretical frameworks exist to analyze the causes and impacts of disasters. The normative view frames the causes of disasters as uncontrollable '*natural*' forces, which limits the role of human agency in causing disasters (Furedi, 2007; Kroll-Smith & Couch, 1991; Quarantelli, 2000). Within this limited scope, the proper means to mitigate the impact of disasters is through developing technologies capable of earlier, more accurate prediction and engineering safer environments, such as constructing levee systems (Fara, 2001; Phillips, Thomas, Fothergill, & Blinn-Pike, 2010). As disaster research shifted from natural disasters to technological disasters, an ecological-symbolic framework emerged that recognized the social construction of disasters as well as ecological vulnerabilities that exacerbated the impact of various events (Furedi, 2007; Kroll-Smith & Couch, 1991). Wisner, Blaikie, Cannon, and Davis (2004) carried the vulnerability concept further by emphasizing how differences in power among social groups determines which strata of society live in environmentally hazardous locations without the resources to respond to hazardous events. This initiated a social vulnerability framework that sees disasters as a result of social vulnerabilities, such as race, class, gender, and age, which stratify resources within most societies (Phillips et al., 2010). Scholars argue the shift in framing the cause of disasters necessitates a change in mitigation strategies to address social vulnerabilities and social inequality in the status quo (Bullard & Wright, 2012; Phillips et al., 2010; Gotham, 2014).

Largely, disaster scholars indicate that post-disaster recovery policies tend to exacerbate social inequalities rather than decrease social vulnerabilities (Chhotray & Few, 2012; Christoplos et al., 2010; Ingram, Franco, Rumbaitis-del Rio, & Khazai, 2006; Le Masson, 2015; Mainka & McNeely, 2011; Pais & Elliot, 2008). The recovery policies in New Orleans favored neoliberal strategies based on decentralizing and privatizing public services through private-public partnerships (Gotham, 2014; Tierney, 2015). Gotham (2014) revealed how colorblind disaster assistance programs perpetuated historic trends of racial discrimination in housing. Pais and Elliot (2008) adapted Logan and Molotch's (2007) growth machine theory to make sense of the processes whereby powerful social forces direct recovery to maximize personal profits and maintain social power dynamics and inequalities. In New Orleans this manifested in planning processes that viewed citizen participation as token appeasement to build public support for recovery plans (Nelson, Ehrenfeucht, & Laska, 2007; Williamson, 2007).

Bullard and Wright (2012) contend the government response to Hurricane Katrina mirrored the previous eighty years of governmental response to African American communities affected by natural and technological disasters. Reminiscent of Bell (1992/1995), the phrase, "All communities are not created equal. Some communities are more equal than others," echoes throughout their book (Bullard & Wright, 2012; p. 3). Their cases illustrate the disparate treatment African American communities receive in relation to white communities. The study shows how Black communities receive less compensation for similar losses, increased risk and exposure to toxic contamination, longer timeframes for official recognition, notification, and clean up of environmental health hazards, and smaller penalties imposed for polluting their communities (2012). They conclude, "Race maps closely with pollution, vulnerability, and unequal protection", which leads people of color to have high levels of distrust in the

government's willingness to protect and compensate their communities in times of disaster (Bullard & Wright, 2012, p. 232).

In the absence of government assistance and adequate personal resources, African Americans and other vulnerable populations rely on social networks to survive and recover from disasters. Stack's (1974) ethnographic account of poor, African Americans' survival mechanisms revealed complex, highly organized networks of real and fictive kin based on resource sharing and reciprocity that enabled households to survive on incomes drastically below the poverty line. Recent scholarship suggests families rely less on the networks Stack (1974) studied because those networks require a high level of reciprocity that many of today's poor households cannot provide due to chronic poverty (Desmond, 2012; Domínguez & Watkins, 2003; Miller-Cribbs & Farber, 2008; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004). Examining social networks in the context Hurricane Katrina and the recovery of New Orleans, Elliot, Haney, and Sams-Abiodun (2010), Fussell (2012), and Litt, Skinner, and Robinson (2012) found that social networks varied in the capacity to provide resources and support during disasters.

Although Hurricane Katrina and the levee failure influenced all facets of life at the same time, most social scientists examined the effects of the storm and the recovery process on a single area of interest, such as: housing, domestic violence, education, or healthcare. While studying individual topics, scholars reported the interrelatedness of issues, such as doctors that needed housing and schools for their families in addition to office space and clients to facilitate return (Berggren & Curiel, 2006). However, the current literature fails to incorporate intersectional analyses of the obstacles to return and fails to allow residents to define those obstacles. A plan to return to a stable life in New Orleans requires residents to overcome many obstacles at once (Litt et al., 2012).

To fill the gap in the literature and to understand the recovery process for African American residents of New Orleans, this study uses multiple theoretical frameworks influenced by Marxism in addition to the social vulnerability framework of disaster. This project combines critical theory, feminist standpoint theory, critical race theory, and intersectionality to examine the lived experiences of African Americans confronted by neoliberal policy changes after Hurricane Katrina. Critical theory and its offshoot, critical race theory, examine how social structures perpetuate inequality as well as how common rhetoric serves to reinforce and normalize social inequalities. Standpoint theory stresses the unique insight forged through the political struggle of marginalized populations. Intersectionality theory emphasizes the ways different identities and political structures overlap to create unique experiences at different intersections (Crenshaw, 1991; Harding, 2004). Using these theories, this project assumes African Americans displaced from New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina and the federal levee failure possess privileged vantage points of and unique experiences with the recovery strategies used after the disaster.

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how African Americans frame obstacles to return to post-Katrina New Orleans. The participants are limited to African American residents of New Orleans because the literature agrees that they were disproportionately affected by the storm and represent the majority of those who faced long-term or permanent displacement (Cutter & Emrich, 2006; Gabe et al., 2005). This study will provide insight into the experience of a subset recognized as having fewer resources to respond to disaster situations. It highlights cases in which disaster response and government assistance are most necessary to mitigate the effects of disaster and facilitate equitable long-term recovery. Through understanding the experiences and obstacles encountered after Hurricane Katrina by

African Americans, policy makers can better understand how post-disaster policy decisions affect marginalized populations and their decision-making processes. In addition, this study seeks to be an exploratory pilot study to direct future research and attract funding and attention to the need for such research.

Theoretical Perspectives

“Theories provide complex and comprehensive conceptual understandings of things that cannot be pinned down: how societies work, how organisations operate, why people interact in certain ways. Theories give researchers different "lenses" through which to look at complicated problems and social issues, focusing their attention on different aspects of the data and providing a framework within which to conduct their analysis. Just as there is no one way to understand why, for instance, a culture has formed in a certain way, many lenses can be applied to a problem, each focusing on a different aspect of it” (Reeves, Albert, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008).

To examine how African Americans made the decision to return to New Orleans or to stay displaced in Houston, this study uses multiple theoretical perspectives. The following section details the history and formation of key theoretical concepts in critical theory, feminist standpoint theory, critical race theory, intersectionality theory, and disaster theory as well as how these concepts apply to the post-Katrina decision-making context of African American survivors. First, a brief overview of Marxism is provided to serve as a foundation for the theoretical discussion that follows.

A Brief Overview of Marxist Philosophy

Karl Marx offered a new approach to understand history and social relations. He viewed capitalism as inherently exploitive and oppressive. As a dialectical materialist, Marx differed from Hegel in that he viewed the infrastructure of society as creating the structure and the superstructure of society; whereas Hegel advanced the opposite. This means that the material conditions of life determine social institutions, which then determine social ideologies and values rather than ideologies determining material conditions. Dialectical refers to the process by which society advances through addressing tensions in society. Hegel believed that there were inherent tensions in society and that it was through wrestling with these tensions that society advanced as

it found answers. Marx located the source of these tensions in capitalism and the struggle over ownership of the means of production.

To Marx, the main tension in society exists between two classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The members of the bourgeoisie own the means of production and extract the surplus value of the proletariat's labor for their own personal gain. Because the members of the proletariat do not own the means of production, they are forced to sell their labor on the open market. This process reduces humans to commodities and leads to the alienation of labor.

Alienation is a result of the division of labor. To describe the process of alienation, Marx wrote,

“Labor produces not only commodity; it produces itself and the worker as a *commodity* - and does so in the proportion in which it produces commodities generally. This fact expresses merely that the object which labor produces-labor's product-confronts it as *something alien* as a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labor is labor which has been congealed in an object, which has become material: is the *objectification* of labor. . . . In the conditions dealt with by political economy this realization of labor appears as *loss of reality* for the workers; objectification as *loss of the object* and *object-bondage*: appropriation as *estrangement*, as *alienation*.” (Tucker, 1974, p. 71, emphasis in original).

Capitalism leads to the alienation of labor because the objects that the worker produces do not belong to the worker. The manifestation of labor instead belongs to the owner of the means of production. Both the labor and the worker are reduced to objects in the production process.

Marx also discussed the idea of false consciousness in the maintenance of the status quo. The bourgeoisie use their power and wealth to ensure the dominant social ideologies, rationalizations, and narratives support their class interests and maintain power relations. This creates a false consciousness among the proletariat, where they fail to see how they are manipulated and exploited as a class. False consciousness often leads workers to act against their

self-interests by upholding the dominant view of society. In this way, false consciousness blocks the formation of a class consciousness among the proletariat, an enlightened awareness where the proletariat sees itself as a unified, exploited class with a common oppressor. Marx predicted that workers would unite first within countries and then internationally to seize control of the means of production (Tucker, 1974). The rise in consciousness through political action would lead the workers to revolt and take possession of the means of production, and thereby, own and control the product of their labors. This shift in material conditions brings about the next stage in social evolution, which, according to Marx, is communism. However, the workers' revolution in the early twentieth century did not bring about the change Marx foresaw. Instead of liberation, fascism and totalitarianism followed the workers' revolution. Critical theorists critiqued Marxism for failing to grasp the importance of culture and politics in subverting the consciousness of the masses in order to maintain the status quo (Bronner, 2011).

History & Origin of Critical Theory

Critical theory developed in the early twentieth century as a critique of traditional philosophy and Western society (Bronner, 2011; Held, 1980; How, 2003; Sudarsan, 1998). Theorists at the University of Frankfurt's Institute for Social Research began developing critical theory in the 1920's and 1930's (Bronner, 2011). Commonly referred to as the Frankfurt School, the most prominent scholars include: Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Georg Lukacs, and Jürgen Habermas (Bronner, 2011; Held, 1980; How, 2003; Sudarsan, 1998). Sudarsan (1998, p. 250) conceptualizes critical theory as, "more a movement than a concrete philosophical and systematized theory." Bronner (2011, p. 4) states, "Critical theory was intended as an alternative" to establishmentarian philosophies, particularly phenomenology and

positivism. Critical theorists attacked phenomenology and positivism “for treating society in ahistorical terms and eliminating genuine subjectivity” (Bronner, 2011, p. 4).

The ideas of the Frankfurt School, which relied heavily upon Marxist philosophies, also critiqued Marxism (Bronner, 2011; Held, 1980; How, 2003; Sudarsan, 1998). Operating in the space between World War I and World War II, the Frankfurt School scholars watched the workers’ movement in Europe culminate in the rise of fascism and totalitarianism (Bronner, 2011; Sudarsan, 1998). This disproved Marx’s belief that socialism would follow capitalism in the evolution of political economies once the proletariat rose up to take control of the means of production from the bourgeoisie (Tucker, 1974). To reconcile Marxist theories with the world around them, the Frankfurt School formulated a Western version of Marxism as a methodology to critically examine and transform society (Bronner, 2011; Sudarsan, 1998). Focused on society’s political and cultural superstructure, the Frankfurt School dismissed economic determinism and the social evolutionist claims of Marx (Bronner, 2011). To form their critique of post-World War I capitalist society, the Frankfurt theorists adopted Marx’s concepts of false consciousness, alienation, reification, and class exploitation (Bronner, 2011; How, 2003; Sudarsan, 1998).

Horkheimer and Adorno critiqued Marx’s failure to integrate the role of politics and culture into his theories of economic domination (Bronner, 2011; Sudarsan, 1998). They argued that politics and culture create and sustain a false worldview that supports the continued submission of the proletariat to an exploitive economic system. In *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno (1944/1997) undertook a Marxist critique of the culture industry as an example of how the market permeates all institutions to ensure the maintenance of the status quo. Through commodification, art loses its authenticity and revolutionary form (1944/1997). In

advanced capitalism, art becomes entertainment and distraction from the physical suffering and exploitation inherent in the social structure (1944/1997).

Adorno (1966/1973) took his critique further. In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno (1966/1973) moved beyond Hegel's theory of positive dialectics, whereby self-reflexive thought moves through social contradictions to arrive at a point of positive growth. Adorno (1966/1973) rejects the assumption that dialectical movement through contradictions always results in a positive conclusion. For Adorno, dialectical movement can result in social regression, such as that which led to Auschwitz (Bronner, 2011). All subjects and objects have multiple identities, or ways in which they can be categorized, as well as non-identities, the part of each subject or object that defies categorization (Cook, 2008). He criticizes philosophy for emphasizing thought to the detriment of objects that defy categorization according to the existing concepts (Bronner 2011; Cook, 2008). Adorno stresses the recognition of the limited ability of a concept to define an object as the path to move beyond the current philosophical limitations in thinking (Cook, 2008). To Adorno, the role of theory and self-reflexive thought is to identify inherent contradictions in the experience of the social world.

Representing a turn in critical theory in the 1960s, Jurgen Habermas focused on language and discourse as the means to transform society through critical reflection (Bronner, 2011; Seidman & Alexander, 2008; Sudarsan 1998). To Habermas, changing society required using undistorted discourse to challenge and change laws, which would then change social relations (Seidman & Alexander, 2008). He developed the concept of the public sphere as the space where mass consciousness could be formed through "liberating discourse" and "political action" (Bronner, 2011, p. 85). Other critical theorists remained skeptical of his ideas because they

rejected the premise that politics could result in anything other than distortion and the perpetuation of false consciousness (2011).

Feminist Standpoint Theory

Feminist standpoint theory also owes its theoretical origins to Hegel and Marx. Hegel first put forth the concept that the oppressed, by virtue of the inherent contradictions within the oppressor/oppressed relationship, possessed a unique view of reality that contains less distortion of social relationships than the perspective of the oppressor (Bowell, n.d.; Cockburn, 2015; Hartsock, 1983/2004). From this foundation, Marx viewed the class-consciousness of the proletariat as the proper vantage point to critique and change society as opposed to the standpoint of the dominant class, the bourgeoisie (Bowell, n.d.; Cockburn, 2015). Feminists drew women into the Marxist framework of oppression, whereby women become the oppressed objects of patriarchy (Cockburn, 2015; Donovan, 2000; Hartsock, 1983/2004; Hekman, 1997). Second-wave feminists continued to build upon these ideas and, led by Patricia Hill Collins, Dorothy Smith, and Nancy Hartsock, created feminist standpoint theory as a method of analysis to understand, challenge, and change patriarchy and the material conditions of women's lives (Brooks, 2007; Cockburn, 2015; Donovan, 2000; Harding, 1997/2004; Hekman, 1997).

According to Hartsock (1981 as quoted in Hekman, 1997, p. 344-3) "At bottom feminism is a mode of analysis, a method of approaching life and politics, rather than a set of political conclusions about the oppression of women" and offers the ability to "connect everyday life with the analysis of the social institutions that shape that life" (Hekman, 1997, p. 343). Within a Marxist framework, Hartsock (1983) argues material conditions determine and restrict knowledge about social relations and differences in material conditions result in different perceptions of reality (Donovan, 2000; Hekman, 1997). The dominant class uses its power to

structure the material conditions within society and to define its perspective as the *correct* view (Cockburn, 2015; Hekman, 1997). To Hartsock (1983/2004) and Smith (1972/2004), the dominant perspective is partial and distorted while the vantage point of the oppressed reveals the actual social relations that structure society and offer the best starting point at which to undertake scientific investigation into the nature of social relationships. This is because “the discourse of the ruling class is ideological, that of the oppressed is not: it reflects the concrete reality of their lives” (Hekman, 1997, p. 346). However, it is only through collective political action that the consciousness, or standpoint of an oppressed group emerges (Cockburn, 2015; Hekman, 1997; Hartsock, 1983/2004; Smith, 1972/2004).

Feminist standpoint theory faced several criticisms. Critics attacked standpoint theory because it assumes all knowledge is socially and historically situated but gives primacy to the standpoint of women as a privileged position that reveals true social relationships (Bowell, n.d.; Haraway, 1988/2004; Harding, 2004; Hartsock, 1983/2004; Hekman, 1997). It is accused of both slipping into relativism and advancing a monolithic feminist standpoint (Harding, 1993/2004; 2004; Hekman, 1997). Harding (1993/2004) and Haraway (1988/2004) respond to these challenges by emphasizing the misinterpretations and false dichotomies created by critics when interpreting standpoint theory. Recognizing that all knowledge is historically situated and partial and rejecting a universal knowledge base does not equate to embracing relativism, where all knowledge claims are equal (Haraway, 1988/2004; Harding, 1993/2004). Instead, Harding (1993/2004, p. 132) states, “standpoint theory provides arguments for the claim that some social situations are scientifically better than others as places from which to start off knowledge projects” rather than endorsing the equality of socially situated knowledge claims. Harding (1993/2004, p. 132) contrasts different assumptions of “the subject or agent of knowledge” that

empiricist epistemology and standpoint theory make to illuminate the source of the misinterpretation. “[For standpoint theory,] the subjects/agents of knowledge . . . are multiple, heterogeneous, and contradictory or incoherent, not unitary, homogenous, and coherent as they are for empiricist epistemology” (Harding, 1993/2004, p. 134). Harding (1993/2004) goes further to suggest that feminist theories require “strong objectivity”, or continued, critical self-reflection, which results in a higher degree of objectivity than that of traditional scientific inquiry, which fails to see and reflect upon its social and historical context. The next theory focused the critical lens on oppression codified by law.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory brings the critical enterprise to bear upon structures of oppression and domination within American society, particularly within the realm of law. Similar to the failure of the workers' revolution to bring about Marx's utopia, Civil Rights legislation in the 1950s and 1960s failed to create the equality African Americans sought. In the 1970s, scholars, primarily - but not only - scholars of color, questioned the actual racial progress that resulted from Civil Rights litigation, which the courts weakened through subsequent legal rulings, issuing in a political era of racial retrenchment (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado, 2011; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; 2001). Branching out of critical legal studies, critical race theory utilized a critical eye to deconstruct the underlying assumptions of the law and Civil Rights legislation to examine how legal doctrine perpetuates white supremacy and racial disparities in power and resources (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Rejecting the liberal premise that the law is neutral, objective, and impartial, critical race theorists critiqued the Left for its adherence to colorblindness, which claims that the path to racial equality lies in disregarding race as a valid category in decision-making processes (Crenshaw et al., 1995;

Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Far from ignoring the category of race in order to redress racial injustice, critical race theorists claim that solutions to address racial inequity must explicitly acknowledge race in order to change racial forms of structural oppression (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Critical race scholars, like many liberals, view race as a social construction, rejecting historical conceptualizations of race as natural or biological (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; 2001; Haney-Lopez, 1994/2000; Omi & Winant, 1994). Critical race theorists critiqued legal decisions that reduced the definition of racism to individual acts perpetrated against people of color in cases where the acts are intentional on the part of the perpetrator (Freeman, 1977-1978/1995). Termed the “perpetrator perspective” by Freeman (1977-1978/1995), this framework fails to recognize the embedded nature of racism, understood as structural processes that simultaneously produce systemic inequalities and mask such inequalities as natural (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. 29). As a result, individuals and communities of color are left unprotected from the conditions of subordination forced upon minority communities, such as unequal access to quality jobs, housing, education, and healthcare (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Freeman, 1977-1978/1995). Freeman (1977-1978/1995) argues adopting a “victim perspective” of racial discrimination would expand the focus of antidiscrimination legislation toward alleviating the conditions of oppression rather than limiting legal redress to individual acts of interpersonal discrimination.

Examining the narrative and mainstream definitions of racial categories, Freeman's (1977-1978/1995) theoretical approach correlates with the idealist camp within critical race theory. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) divide critical race theorists into two perspectives: idealist and realists. Idealists, “hold that racism and discrimination are matters of thinking, mental

categorization, attitude, and discourse” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 17). Therefore idealist remedies seek to “chang[e] the system of images, words, attitudes, unconscious feelings, scripts, and social teachings by which we convey to one another that certain people are less intelligent, reliable, hardworking, virtuous, and American as others” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 17). Similar to cultural feminists, critical race idealists deconstruct and challenge mainstream narratives and offer alternative images and conceptualizations of racial representation and conditions of oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Donovan, 2000).

Realists acknowledge the importance of words and attitudes in perpetuating racism; however, they view racism as “a means by which society allocates privilege and status” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 17). Many realists are also materialists and presuppose material conditions determine society's ideologies, which serve as rationalizations for differential treatment and imbalances in power (2001). For critical race scholars writing from a realist perspective, “understanding the ebb and flow of racial progress and retrenchment requires a careful look at conditions prevailing at different times in history” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 18). Rather than challenging images and representation, realists focus on changing the material conditions of people and communities of color as the proper avenue for alleviating racism and structural inequality (2001).

Regarded as laying the intellectual foundation of critical race theory, Derrick Bell's (1976/1995; 1980/1995) alternative vision of the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* (347 U. S. 483, 1954) case employs a realist perspective (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Bell (1980/1995) critically examines the state of political affairs following the Korean War in order to resituate the school desegregation decision within the interests of the white elite. He claims the need to improve the image of the United States in the international arena,

particularly among developing nations which the U. S. feared may embrace communism, led to the decision to desegregate public education (Bell, 1980/1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Bell (1980/1995) contends that lower courts enforced integration in order to legitimate local judicial power over the power of local school boards when school boards fought federal judicial mandates to desegregate public schools. Dudziak (1988) later conducted archival research of previously classified federal documents that corroborated Bell's (1976/1995) theory of interest convergence in the case of the Cold War and desegregation.

In addition to revisioning history and reframing representational narratives, critical race theory also critiqued liberalism and critical legal studies for a number of reasons. Peller (1990/1995) and Gotanda (1991/1995) refute the usefulness of colorblind ideology and policies, which fail to address structural racism. Calmore (1992/1995), Cook (1990/1995), Crenshaw (1988/1995), and Matsuda (1987/1995) contend that critical reflection and analysis of critical legal studies must be grounded in real-life experiences of minority and marginalized communities in order to create positive change, instead of negative impacts, in the lives of those at the bottom of the U. S. social hierarchy. Dalton (1987/1995) and Delgado (1984/1995) illuminate and challenge the systemic exclusion of work by scholars of color in Civil Rights scholarship. Crenshaw (1988/1995), Matsuda (1987/1995), and Delgado and Stefancic (2001) provide critiques of liberal rights discourse. Delgado and Stefancic (2001, p. 23) characterize critical race theorists as skeptical of rights because of their “procedural (for example, to a fair process) rather than substantive (for example, to food, housing, education)” focus and for the ease with which courts historically restricted civil rights that clash with powerful elite interests. Crenshaw (1988/1995) acknowledges the limitations of redress through rights but also highlights the significance of the rights discourse for the Civil Rights Movement. Greene (1990/1995) and

Bell (1992/1995) reject the notion that the law can correct current racial inequality and urge communities of color to adopt a new approach to challenge and end racial oppression. Freeman (1981/2000) holds that Bell's bleak projection for the usefulness of law in creating racial change and ending discrimination is a disservice to law students because it lacks hope.

Critical race theory responded to criticism from both external and internal sources (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; 2001). Kennedy (1989/2000) critiqued the exclusion thesis (academia is racist and excludes the work of scholars of color) and the distinctiveness thesis (minority scholars hold unique and expert views on racial matters due to their race) as specifically advanced by Bell, Delgado, and Matsuda. Kennedy (1989/2000) equates the distinctiveness thesis with essentialism, similar to critiques of feminist standpoint theory. He writes, "Matsuda's analysis is marred by both her tendency to homogenize the experience of persons of color and her tendency to minimize the heterogeneity of opinions held and articulated by persons of color" (p. 315) and dismisses the distinctive thesis as a mechanism "that. . . *stereotypes* scholars" (p. 316, emphasis in original). In response to the exclusion thesis, Kennedy (1989/2000) demanded that critical race theorists empirically prove the merit of the work of scholars before decrying legal academia excluded it on racial terms. Responding to Kennedy's criticisms, Espinoza contended that Kennedy failed to understand the importance of context and held critical race theorists to the universalist standards of merit that they rejected as racist (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Barnes compared the unrealistic requirements that Kennedy demanded to prove discrimination in Civil Rights scholarship to similarly unrealistic standards set by the Supreme Court to prove racial discrimination (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Like Kennedy, Farber and Sherry (1995/2000) rejected the distinctiveness thesis espoused by critical race theorists. In addition, they denounced critical race theory as anti-

Semitic based on its critique of merit (1995/2000). Ferber and Sherry (1995/2000, p. 579) state, according to critical race theory, “‘merit’ has no meaning, except as a way for those in power to perpetuate the existing hierarchy.” This leads Ferber and Sherry (1995/2000) to question how the success of Jews and Asians as “model minorities” can be explained. They propose there are only four possibilities, all of which are anti-Semitic, and challenge critical race theorists to devise a “more moderate theory about the social construction of merit which would prove more defensible” (Farber & Sherry, 1995/2000, p. 582). To these anti-Semitic accusations, critical race theorists contended their critics “confused criticism of a standard with criticism of individuals who perform well under that standard” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 90). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) also indicate the ahistorical perspective of Farber and Sherry rendered invisible the history and experience of racial oppression that Jews and Asians endured.

Rosen (1996/2000, p. 588) echoes Kennedy's concerns of essentialism but highlights the O. J. Simpson acquittal as real-world proof of “racial perspectivism”. In recognizing the impact of critical race theory on the world of popular culture as well as the courtroom, Rosen (1996/2000) blasts critical race theory for allowing murders like O. J. Simpson to walk free through emphasizing the importance of utilizing historical storytelling in the courtroom to offer counter narratives of life from the perspective of the oppressed. In Rosen's (1996/2000) account, critical race theory allowed Cochran to place the Los Angeles Police Department on trial as racists, which resonated with the African American jury. In response to claims of essentialism and against the use of storytelling, Delgado and Stefancic (2001, p. 91) remind their readers that “critical race theorists deploy stories and narratives as a means of building cohesion within minority groups and shattering the mindset created by the stories of the dominant group” and that they reject the concept of objective truth.

Storytelling is one tactic to challenge negative mainstream representations of minorities, as groups and individuals. Storytelling can highlight extreme experiences as well as common experiences, which lends to group unification. Group unification is necessary because, as critics point out, minority communities are diverse in thought, conviction, and action (Kennedy 1989/2000; Rosen, 1996/2000). Critical race theorists recognize the need to unify in order to attain the political pressure necessary to change an inherently racist system, but they are also mindful of the ways that identities conflict, compound, and diversify experiences of racism as indicated by the large body of critical race scholarship that focuses on intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991; Crenshaw et al. 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In this way, critical race theorists view themselves as using the tools available to unite minorities to create change as well as to examine the different needs of the various subgroups within the larger community.

Internal criticism focuses on the relationship between theory and practice as well as strategies to create social change and end white supremacy and oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Bell (1976/1995), Calmore (1992/1995), Matsuda (1987/1995), Crenshaw (1988/1995), as well as Lopez (1989/2000), Alfieri (1991/2000), Su (1998/2000), and Williams (1997/2000) challenge critical legal scholars as well as critical race theorists to ground their theories and ideas in the real-world experiences, needs, and desires of people of color. Lopez (1989/2000) illustrates how different social groups, such as women of color, devise strategies of survival and of social change that go unrecognized by legal academics. Su (1998/2000) draws attention to the power of the language to silence or empower. Contradicting client desires for her “to tell their story for them”, Su (1998/2000) contends that speaking for clients renders them voiceless while encouraging them to speak in their native tongue transforms them into “poetic and strong” (p. 612). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) conclude theory and praxis must inform each

other. Praxis provides the opportunity to empirically test theories, and theories provide new strategies, visions, and conceptualizations of how to transform society to eradicate oppression and discrimination (2001).

Internal criticism also questions the types of strategies that are necessary to end racial oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Much of this debate rests on the differences between the idealist and realist perspectives within critical race theory. As critical race theory focused more on representation and identity issues, realists perceived the movement as losing sight of “its materialist roots and dwelling on matters that concern middle class minorities: micro aggressions, racial insults, unconscious discrimination, and affirmative action in higher education” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 95). To materialists, this transition is critical because they view change in material conditions, not ideologies, as the primary means to alleviate oppression (2001). If critical race theorists focus exclusively on issues of identity, realists question if the end of oppression is attainable (2001). Delgado and Stefancic (2001, p. 95) indicate that internal criticisms “question only the movement's emphasis and allocation of resources. They do not threaten its solidarity, vitality, or ability to generate vital insights into America's racial predicament.” The next section introduces intersectionality theory, which builds upon feminist and critical race theories.

Theory of Intersectionality

As critics of feminist standpoint theory and critical race theory indicated, minority groups contain individuals with different thoughts, attitudes, and experiences of oppression. Crenshaw (1989) coined the term “intersectionality” to highlight the ways race, sex, and class interact to compound oppression; however, Black feminist scholars have long described the differences race and class create in the experiences of women (Collins, 1986; Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 1981;

Donovan, 2000; Smith, 2013-2014). According to Smith (2013-2014), “Black feminist[s]. . . demonstrated that women of color are not merely “doubly oppressed” by both sexism and racism. Black women’s experience of sexism is shaped equally by racism and class inequality and is therefore different in certain respects from the experience of white, middle-class women.” Through examining case law where Black women challenged workplace discrimination and sexual violence, Crenshaw (1989) illuminated how antidiscrimination policy regarded sexism and racism as distinct processes. Crenshaw (1989) illustrates how this renders invisible the unique experiences of discrimination Black women face at the intersection of race and gender. The courts only protect Black women from discrimination that affects all women or all Black people thereby leaving them unprotected in their marginalized status within both communities (1989).

Since the early formation of intersectionality by women of color, three areas of scholarship have emerged. According to Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013, p. 785),

“the first consist[s] of applications of an intersectional framework or investigations of intersectional dynamics, the second consist[s] of discursive debates about the scope and content of intersectionality as a theoretical and methodological paradigm, and the third consist[s] of political interventions employing an intersectional lens.”

Few-Demo (2014, p. 169) compares different conceptualizations of intersectionality as a theoretical framework, which she characterizes, “as an extension of racial/ethnic feminisms and critical race theories.” Hancock (2007, p. 74) claims “intersectionality represents an emerging paradigm from critical theory and its companion deconstructivist approaches.” As a methodological framework, “researchers are encouraged to examine the fluidity, variability, and the temporality of interactive processes that occur between and within multiple social groups, institutions, and social practices” (Few-Demo, 2014, p. 170). Based on Greenwood (2008) and

Crenshaw (1989), Few-Demo (2014) lists four assumptions of the intersectional paradigm. First, people can possess multiple, complex, and sometimes conflicting, social identities (Crenshaw, 1989; Few-Demo, 2014). In addition, the intersectional paradigm assumes that “social identities are grounded in ideological and symbolic domains” and that these domains “are historically and contextually situated” (Few-Demo, 2014, p. 170). Finally, the intersectional framework views social identities as being influenced by power structures (Few-Demo, 2014; Greenwood 2008).

Crenshaw (1991) delineates three forms of intersectionality: structural, political, and representational. Structural intersectionality illuminates how “overlapping structures of subordination” in society create or perpetuate inequality among and within different social groups (Cho et al., 2013, p. 797). Political intersectionality focuses attention on how traditional approaches to antidiscrimination policies based on race or gender perpetuate the marginalization of women of color (Cho et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 1989; Few-Demo, 2014). It also “reflects a dual concern for resisting the systemic forces that significantly shape the differential life chances of intersectionality's subjects and for the reshaping of modes of resistance beyond allegedly universal, single-axis approaches” (Cho et al., 2013, p. 800). Representational intersectionality examines the ways that stereotypical images of individuals and communities form narratives that influence the shape of social policies and institutions (Crenshaw, 1991). Emphasizing the theoretical links to the Marxist and feminist concept of praxis and goal of social transformation, the analysis of representational images, stereotypes, and narratives is the first step in re-shaping the images and narratives that characterize marginalized individuals and communities to change social conditions (Cho et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 1989; Few-Demo, 2014).

McCall (2005) approaches intersectionality as a methodology to examine categories of analysis. She defines “a methodology [as] a coherent set of ideas about the philosophy, methods,

and data that underlie the research process and the production of knowledge” (McCall, 2005, p. 1774). This definition illustrates her concern “with the philosophical underpinnings of methods and the kinds of substantive knowledge that are produced in the application of methods” (McCall, 2005, p. 1774). She continues, “My focus is on the connections among these elements of the research process rather than on identifying any particular philosophy or method as feminist...” (McCall, 2005, p. 1774).

McCall (2005) identifies three approaches to intersectional research: anti-categorical, inter-categorical, and intra-categorical, but she also recognizes that not all intersectional studies utilize one of the three approaches she advances. The anti-categorical approach views the use of analytic categories as simplistic and reductionist because of the fundamental complexity of social relations (McCall, 2005). Similar to Adorno’s (1966/1973) concept of the non-identity of identity, the anti-categorical approach recognizes the limitations of categories to fully represent the complexity of social relations; as such, this view holds that the use of analytic categories is simplistic and leads researchers to deconstruct categories of analysis to illuminate complexity (McCall, 2005). The intra-categorical approach typically relies upon narratives to reveal within group diversity (McCall, 2005). Crenshaw (1989; 1991) as well as many early intersectional studies by academic women of color utilized the intra-categorical approach to highlight the unique experiences of Black women in comparison to Black men and white women. The inter-categorical approach focuses on the “relationships of inequality among already constituted social groups” (McCall, 2005, p. 1975). This approach takes inequality between groups as its empirical hypothesis as opposed to the other approaches which assume a priori that inequality exists between groups (McCall, 2005). Due to this focus, the approach is “systematically comparative” (McCall, 2005, p. 1786). Intersectionality developed independently across disciplines (Hancock,

2007; McCall, 2005). In the following section, the discussion shifts to apply these four theories to the context of the study.

Theory Applied

The preceding sections focused on the history and evolution of ideas of several critical approaches. This section describes how these theories form the research perspective for this study. According to Creswell (2007, p. 27), “critical theory perspectives are concerned with empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender.” Critical theory lends itself to the deconstruction of social institutions through the questioning of assumptions in search for inequalities and injustices (Bronner, 2011; Creswell, 2007). Agger (1991, p. 109) asserts, “critical theorists attempt to develop a mode of consciousness and cognition that breaks the identity of reality and rationality, viewing social facts not as inevitable constraints on human freedom but as pieces of history that can be changed.” Creswell (2007) suggests that critical theory can influence research design as a methodology or substantively, meaning critical theory influences the way the researcher reads and writes or influences the researcher’s topic of interest and conceptualization of the topic. This study incorporates critical theory and critical race theory substantively because it seeks to deconstruction assumptions of return as voiced in the media and ground the experience of return in structural inequalities and in race, gender, and class differences.

As an outgrowth of the critical enterprise, intersectionality as a research paradigm informs this study in several ways. Drawing on Crenshaw's (1991) concept of political intersectionality, this study seeks to understand the “overlapping structures of subordination”, namely housing, education, employment, and healthcare, that influenced the decision-making process of African Americans following Hurricane Katrina. Brodtkin Sacks (1994) identified

these social institutions as key to upward mobility in the United States and as arenas in which the federal government supported systemic discrimination against African Americans. Drawing upon the work of Tomlinson (2013), Spade (2013), and Verloo (2013), this study recognizes important points of intersection are determined according to power relations within society, not according to identity claims. Like Spade (2013) and Cho et al. (2013), I reject a single-axis approach to understanding the complex processes of displacement, return, and recovery where survivors found themselves at the intersection of several changing institutional forces. Verloo (2013), reminiscent of Young (1990), advocates a politics of recognition and inclusion of different identities in order to alleviate policy decisions that perpetuate inequality. Bringing marginalized voices to the decision-making table provides the opportunity for the disenfranchised to discuss how possible solutions might interact with their specific context to further, rather than alleviate, discrimination and inequality (Cho et al., 2013; Verloo, 2013; Young, 1990).

Drawing upon standpoint theory, this study focuses on the experiences of African American residents of New Orleans. As a historically marginalized community involved in political activity to liberate itself from oppression, African Americans have unique insight into the structures of domination and oppression within the United States (Collins, 1991). Furthermore, the community's specific location on the margins of society leaves it particularly vulnerable in the context of colorblind disaster recovery policy. For example, the Road Home program, designed to compensate Louisiana homeowners whose houses Hurricane Katrina destroyed, compensated families according to the pre-storm value of their home (Gotham, 2014). This neglects the historical context of discrimination in real estate in the United States; both the discrimination that excludes African Americans from living in white communities as well as the discrimination that assigns higher land and house values to homes in white communities in

comparison to Black communities (2014). African American housing advocates successfully challenged the design of the Road Home program as discriminatory (2014).

Cognizant of the critiques against standpoint theory and intersectionality, this study does not seek to universalize or essentialize the experiences of the participants or of displaced African Americans (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; 2001; Hekman, 1997). Instead, it seeks to understand the nuanced differences that influenced their individual agency within the context of structural constraints on recovery and return (Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens, 1984). This analysis hopes to reveal the barriers to return as identified by Black residents to illuminate possible causes of the disparate return rates among African American and white residents that previous research reported (see Henderson et al., 2015). Through the experiences of African Americans and the unique standpoint that emerged following the political nature of Hurricane Katrina's recovery, this study also aims to critically examine structural policy decisions and their impacts as well as media representations of recovery. The next section focuses on disaster theory and illustrates how the critical perspective influences the theoretical frameworks used to understand of the causes and impacts of disasters.

Theorizing about Disaster: From Normative to Social Vulnerability Frameworks

Quarantelli (2000) chronicles the historical evolution of disaster planning and emergency management to illustrate the impact of alternative perspectives on disaster studies research. His conclusions are based on reviews of published and unpublished empirical studies and governmental reports on disasters housed at the Disaster Research Center (DRC) at the University of Delaware (2000). Before the Enlightenment, religious explanations dominated cultural understandings of disaster (Furedi, 2007; Quarantelli, 2000). As Enlightenment intellectuals used secular rationality to discredit religious theories of the world, society's

understanding of disasters shifted from the “Acts of God” to “Acts of Nature” (Furedi, 2007; Quarantelli, 2000, p. 3).

Dynes (2000) credits Rousseau’s 1756 explanation of the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 as the first sociological explanation of disaster; however, he states it took almost 200 years for disaster research to emerge as a sociological enterprise. Largely, society accepted Voltaire’s perspective that the Lisbon earthquake represented the futility of religious optimism (Dynes, 2000). Rousseau, an outsider among Enlightenment thinkers and a devout believer, challenged Voltaire’s attack on religious optimism by indicating the human action necessary to escalate an earthquake into a disaster, i.e. the decision to build tall buildings on land susceptible to earthquakes and the individual decisions among the nobility to delay evacuation in order to save material possessions (Dynes, 2000). Rousseau also suggested the earthquake only represented a disaster because it impacted the upper classes of Lisbon (Dynes, 2000). Bullard and Wright (2012) arrive at a similar conclusion in their comparative analysis of primary and secondary data on the impact of disasters on African American communities. The authors indicate local Florida officials did not view the Okeechobee Hurricane of 1928, the second deadliest disaster in United States history, as a disaster because, although the hurricane devastated an isolated African American community, the nearby white community sustained minimal damage (2012).

How societies frame disasters determines how governments, communities, and individuals prepare and respond to disaster situations (Dynes, 1993; Furedi, 2007; Kroll-Smith & Couch, 1991; Quarantelli, 2000). Classifying disasters as “Acts of God” fostered a fatalistic perspective because this view locates disasters outside of human influence and control (Quarantelli, 2000, p. 5). The shift to an “Act of Nature” approach emphasized the ability of engineering to reduce risk by creating safer buildings and protection systems (Quarantelli, 2000,

p. 5). This perspective introduces limited human agency to lessen the impact of disasters through improving physical structures (Quarantelli, 2000). According to Quarantelli (2000, p. 3-4), as technological accidents, as opposed to natural weather phenomena, began to cause more disasters and as sociologist undertook empirical studies of disasters, society began to view disasters as “Acts of Men and Women”. Situating disasters as social constructions reveals the possibility of human action to mitigate and minimize the impact of disasters (2000).

The normative view of disasters as social events that are not natural in origin or impact emerged from this evolution of ideas (Dynes, 1993; Furedi, 2007; R. Perry, 2005; Quarantelli, 2000). The normative view recognizes that natural phenomena may act as catalysts; however, disasters are a breakdown of social relations and social systems (Dynes, 1993). Dynes (1993, p. 177) lists five implications of regarding disasters as social constructions for disaster planning:

1. “Prevention and mitigation must stress social rather than physical solutions.
2. Disaster planning is not primarily the search for the implementation of technological solutions.
3. Emphasis on the social allows for proactive, rather than reactive, strategies. Thus, it is possible to take actions prior to the appearance of the physical agent.
4. Emphasis in the planning can be on internal, rather than external, factors. The potential threat is not ‘out there’, but resides in the ‘internal’ flaws within the social system.
5. The view of disasters as social phenomena allows such happenings to be incorporated as a part of the nation’s development process. In fact, what is often called the ‘recovery’ process after a disaster is development. That is, the recovery process is a process in which the population improves its level of adaptation to its environment and also lowers its future vulnerabilities.”

This view also impacts the level of analysis for disaster planning and research. As social phenomena, disaster planning shifted from focusing on physical agents, i.e. fires, hurricanes, flooding, etc., to planning for different societal levels (1993). Drabek (1986) suggests ordering

social levels based on increasing structural complexity, moving from individual to group to organizational to community to society and, finally, to international actors, with each level requiring a unique planning focus. However, Dynes (1993) advocates the local community level as the appropriate level for disaster planning because the community unit maximizes local resources (in comparison to individual, groups, or organizations). In addition, local community level actors are more likely to become active in disaster response situations before more complex units, such as societal units or international actors (1993).

Dynes's (1994, p. 149) critique of dominant emergency planning emphasizes the false assumptions on which much of contemporary disaster planning is based due to viewing disasters as analogous to an "enemy attack". The dominant model assumes chaos, antisocial behavior, and widespread panic in the immediate aftermath as well as dependent, passive victims incapable of proper, rational decision-making (Dynes, 1993; 1994; Wettenhall, 2009). These assumptions lead to the use of a military "command and control" emergency response strategy (Dynes, 1994, p. 149). Emergency plans often focus on which agency has decision-making authority over various preparedness and response activities (Dynes, 1993). Citing DRC field research findings, Dynes (1993, p. 178) argues, "Planning is a process, not a product. What needs to be created is not a compendium of useless papers, but accepted ways of approaching problems dealing with preparedness, response, recovery, and/or mitigation." As an alternative, Dynes (1994) advances the problem-solving model, which emphasizes continuity between pre- and post-disaster behavior and coordination and cooperation within and among government agencies and with community organizations in disaster response. This model views impacted communities and households as capable of using existing decision-making structures to address post-disaster needs

(Dynes, 1994). The problem-solving model also stresses the importance of integrating pre-disaster and emergent organizations into flexible recovery plans (1994).

As illustrated by Dynes (1993; 1994), definitions and assumptions influence policy measures and disaster management strategies. As such, disaster studies scholars critique and reframe research perspectives throughout the field's history (Drabek, 2007; Freudenburg, 1997; Furedi, 2007; Kroll-Smith & Couch, 1991; Wettenhall, 2009). In response to the "generic" view of disaster offered by Quarantelli (1985; 1987), Kroll-Smith and Couch (1991, p. 356) identify strengths and limitations in Quarantelli's perspective before presenting an ecological-symbolic approach to analyzing disasters. Kroll-Smith and Couch (1991) commend Quarantelli's efforts to advance a common sociological definition of disaster that focuses on their socially constructed nature rather than geophysical aspects. They write Quarantelli's "generic perspective views disasters as consensus-type social crisis occasions wherein demands are exceeding resources and emergent responses may generate social change" (Kroll-Smith & Couch, 1991, p. 357). The authors support viewing disasters as social, rather than geophysical, situations and recognizing that outcomes depend on emerging and changing, not static, conditions and resources (1991).

Although supportive of some aspects of the generic perspective, Kroll-Smith and Couch (1991) suggest it is limiting for two reasons. First, it reduces possible research questions to a narrow focus on the "collective effort...to terminate a particular crisis by restoring capabilities to the level of demands...whether the agent is of the slow onset, cumulative and diffuse... or rapid, impactive, and focused variety" (Quarantelli, 1985, p. 50 as quoted in Kroll-Smith & Couch, 1991, p. 358). In this move, the unique attributes of different disaster phenomena are obscured or ignored in favor of highlighting similarities among them (Kroll-Smith & Couch, 1991). The second reduction revolves around the inclusion of consensus as a modifier to exclude dissensus-

type social crisis occasions, such as war and terrorism, from disaster studies research (Kroll-Smith & Couch, 1991). Kroll-Smith and Couch (1991, p. 359) view this as an arbitrary distinction, which precludes analyzing “the relationship of disasters to social conflict” as well as excluding disasters with a contested meaning, such as many technological disasters where communities, governments, and private actors frequently disagree over cause, impact, blame, and/or adequate response measures (Picou, 2009; Picou, Marshall, & Gill, 2004).

After critiquing the generic perspective, Kroll-Smith and Couch (1991) turn their attention to the strengths and limitations of the event-quality framework. As a newly emerging perspective in the mid-80s, Kroll-Smith and Couch (1991) indicate the diversity of physical factors scholars used to differentiate natural and technological disasters as well as contradictory definitions established by scholars who utilize an event-quality approach. They suggest its main strength lies in acknowledging the physical and social aspects of disasters (1991). However, the lack of consistency in classifying disasters, for example as natural or technological, or as short-term or long-term is its major weakness (1991). This flaw leads to confusion and makes it hard to compare different empirical projects that use the framework (1991). In addition, much of the literature emphasizes linear causality between physical and social changes occurring after disasters (1991). According to Kroll-Smith and Couch (1991), this fails to recognize the significance of human interpretation of events.

Building upon previous conceptualizations of disaster, Kroll-Smith and Couch (1991) advance an ecological-symbolic approach to framing disaster. To strengthen the event-quality approach, the authors ground it within an ecological-symbolic framework that relies on two basic assumptions:

“(1) people exist in exchange relationships with their built, modified and biophysical environments. ... (2) disruptions in the

ordered relationships between individuals, groups and communities, and their built, modified and natural environments, are labeled and responded to as hazards and disasters” (Kroll-Smith & Couch, 1991, p. 361).

By recognizing the interdependency of people and their environment and the human subjectivity involved in classifying an occasion as a disaster, this framework encourages scholars to investigate “how... aversive agents alter the relationships between communities and their environments and how ... these environmental changes shape the course of social change” (Kroll-Smith & Couch, 1991, p. 362). Kroll-Smith and Couch (1991) add the ecological-symbolic perspective draws attention to the processes through which sociopolitical agendas appropriate natural resources. The authors suggest the ecological stance addresses the inability of both the generic and event-quality approach to clearly distinguish between natural and technological disasters (1991). It does this by shifting focus from the cause to the impact of disasters (1991). The symbolic aspect directs researchers to consider for the first time “the role of human agency in appraising and interpreting disaster” (Kroll-Smith & Couch, 1991, p. 364).

Having a framework to understand both natural and technological disasters is important because communities respond differently to different types of disasters (Furedi, 2007; Wettenhall; 2009). Scholars such as Erikson (1994), Kroll-Smith, Couch, and Marshall (1997), Gill and Picou (1998), and Freudenburg (1997) studied technological disasters like dam failures, toxic contamination, and chemical spills. These authors regarded technological disasters as more disruptive and harmful than natural disasters because community impacts are often longer and more severe (Erikson, 1994; Freudenburg, 1997; Furedi, 2007; Gill & Picou, 1998; Kroll-Smith et al., 1997). Frequently lacking a discernable end, technological disasters tend to create a lasting sense of anxiety within affected communities; in addition, “blame, mutual recrimination, and conflict” arise instead of unity or solidarity (Furedi, 2007, p. 484).

Furedi (2007) characterizes the transition from a generic sociological lens to the ecological perspective approach of the 1980s as a shift in scholarly focus from community resilience and solidarity to community vulnerability. The concept of community vulnerability also shifted over time. Originally, scholars limited the scope of causes of community vulnerability to ecological factors such as proximity to hazard-prone areas, population density, climate change, and land use decisions (Weichselgartner & Sendzimir, 2004). By the mid-90s scholars, such as Wisner et al.(2004), Peacock, Morrow, and Gladwin (1997), Phillips et al. (2010), Enarson (2012), and Bullard and Wright (2012), began to focus on socio-political causes of community vulnerability and studied how marginalized communities experienced, made sense of, and recovered from natural and technological disasters (Furedi, 2007).

Wisner et al. (2004, p. 5) pushed the field of disaster studies beyond ecological vulnerabilities by “link[ing the] analysis of disasters that are supposedly caused mainly by natural hazards to broader patterns in society.” They challenge scholars to move beyond socio-environmental factors, such as impoverished communities forced to live on cheap, hazard-prone land, and to examine how underlying political and economic social structures manifest disasters (2004). Wisner et al. (2004, p. 11, emphasis in original) define vulnerability as, “*the characteristics of a person or group and their situation that influence their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural hazard* (an extreme natural event or process).” They stress that power relations determine which groups are at risk in society and what material resources and information different social groups have to respond to and recover from environmental triggers (2004). Focusing on disasters and recovery in less developed countries, Wisner et al. (2004, p. 6, emphasis in original) state, “People’s exposure to risk differs according to their *class* (which affects their income, how they live and where),

whether they are *male or female*, what their *ethnicity* is, what *age group* they belong to, whether they are *disabled* or not, their *immigration status*, and so forth.”

Phillips et al. (2010) employ the social vulnerability approach to understanding the impact of natural hazards. They identify the same socio-political hazards as Wisner et al. (2004). They explore the ways different theoretical perspectives shape inquiry, knowledge, and action (2010). Phillips et al. (2010) draw on Gramsci’s (1971) conceptualization of hegemony and Foucault’s (1980) conceptualizations of truth and power to explain the continued dominance of the normative view of disasters as natural, freak events that create chaos in the face of decades of empirical research suggesting the central role socio-political vulnerabilities play in determining the impact of environmental hazards. They suggest the dominant view continues to thrive in popular culture and media representations because it shifts blame from the structures of power to processes outside of human influence (Phillips et al., 2010). Thus, the dominant view controls popular discourse to ensure the balance of power does not change in the wake of social disasters (2010). The research on disaster recovery and vulnerable populations concludes most disaster recovery plans exacerbate social and environmental vulnerabilities (Chhotray & Few, 2012; Christoplos et al., 2010; Ingram et al., 2006; Le Masson, 2015; Mainka & McNeely, 2011; Pais & Elliot, 2008; Wang, Chen, & Li, 2012). The next chapter reviews the empirical research on social vulnerabilities and disaster impacts and recovery before focusing on scholarly literature concerning Hurricane Katrina and the recovery of New Orleans.

Literature Review

The normative view of disasters focused on hazards, such as tornados or flooding, to the exclusion of technological disasters like chemical spills and toxic contamination (Furedi, 2007; Kroll-Smith, 1991; Quarantelli, 2000). This shaped what scholars identified as the impact of disasters. Initial codification projects to summarize the growing body of disaster research identified positive outcomes for communities struck by natural disasters (Quarantelli & Dynes, 1977). For example, Fritz (1961) conducted the first attempt to summarize early disaster research and found a “*therapeutic community*” emerged, capable of mediating the psychological responses of victims (Quarantelli & Dynes, 1977, p. 26, emphasis in original). Dynes (1974) drew upon field observations and interviews to understand post-disaster organizational behavior. He found some pre-disaster organizations take on new tasks and many organizations form after disasters that help with pre-disaster and emergent community needs in contrast to assumptions that people could not operate rationally after crises (1974).

Scholars who studied technological disasters found much more devastating impacts than those caused by natural phenomena (Erikson, 1976; Furedi, 2007; Kroll-Smith, 1991; Picou, 2009; Picou et al., 2004; Wettenhall, 2009). In a combination of field research and qualitative analysis of deposition transcripts, Erikson (1976) found the survivors of a dam failure in Buffalo Creek, West Virginia, experienced long-term negative psychological impacts. He described the loss of community as a collective trauma that prevents displaced residents from being able to heal in the ways previous disaster research illustrated (1976). However, Dynes (1978) questioned the validity of his findings because Erikson (1976) collected the data as a member of the legal team representing the victims in a lawsuit against the coal company responsible for the destruction.

Rather than community solidarity, technological disasters often fostered a *corrosive* community, where victims and other groups assign blame and expect compensation (Freudenburg, 1997; Furedi, 2007; Picou et al., 2004). Marshall, Picou, and Gill (2003, p. 78) explain, “the term ‘corrosive’ implies that the negative impacts of some disasters damage a community and individuals over an extended period of time.” Based on previous research, they identified three factors particularly critical to predict the emergence and persistence of corrosive communities: “(1) the mental and physical health of victims; ... (2) ‘recreancy’ or perceptions of governmental or organizational failure; ... and (3) protracted litigation” (Picou et al., 2004, p. 1496). In a longitudinal study of the impact of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, Picou et al. (2004) collected quantitative survey data through field interviews and follow-up mailings in Cordova, Alaska, from 1989 and 1992. They used structural equation modeling to analyze their data to allow the variables to operate both independently and dependently variables (2004). Picou et al. (2004, p. 1513) found “the mediating variables – work disruption, litigation stress, recreancy, risk of future spills, and community attachment – were predicted by exogenous social structural characteristics”, particularly being a litigant. Litigant respondents dealt with more sources of stress than non-litigant respondents reported (2004). Their findings suggest there may be merit to Dynes (1978) critique of Erikson’s (1976) methodology, which relied primarily upon the experiences of litigants.

In addition to Erikson (1976), other scholars sought to understand the psychological impact of natural disasters on victims in order to determine if recovery policies adequately address post-disaster mental health needs. Goenjian et al. (2001) investigated the impact of Hurricane Mitch to determine if the storm caused posttraumatic stress disorder and depression among Nicaraguan teens. They surveyed 158 public school children from one school in each of

three cities with varying degrees of damage from Hurricane Mitch (Goenjian et al., 2001). Respondents filled out three different questionnaires: “a hurricane exposure questionnaire, the Child Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Reaction Index, and the Depression Self-Rating Scale” (Goenjian et al., 2001, p. 788). The authors used Kendall’s tau b, Pearson’s correlation, and multiple stepwise regressions to analyze the data, to compare results between cities, and to identify significant demographic and hurricane-related factors in predicting posttraumatic stress disorder and depression (Goenjian et al., 2001, p. 790). They found a city’s level of impact, objective hurricane-related exposure, subjective hurricane-related exposure, and current thoughts of revenge “explained 68% of the variance in Child PTSD Reaction Index scores” (Goenjian et al., 2001, p. 792). Additionally, they found PTSD scores, death of a family member, and sex “explained 59% of the variance in depression score[s]” (Goenjian et al., 2001, p. 792). This lead the authors to conclude that the level of impact and degree of exposure to objective and subjective features significantly impacts the psychological state of teens affected by disasters (2001).

Thompson, Norris, and Hanacek (1993) examined the psychological effects of adult hurricane victims to ascertain if age differences contribute to post-disaster stress vulnerability. Through in-person interviews conducted twelve, eighteen, and thirty-four months after impact, the authors surveyed 831 adults affected by Hurricane Hugo about hurricane-related stresses and their current psychological condition (1993). A curvilinear regression analysis that controlled for differences in sex, race, education, and traumatic and undesirable life events revealed that all age groups suffered psychological consequences as a result of Hurricane Hugo (1993). The study revealed the most vulnerable were middle-aged participants (1993). Middle-aged respondents maintained a higher level of responsibilities than other age groups before the storm, which

increased their vulnerability to post-disaster stress (Thompson et al., 1993). The authors conclude, “our study provides ample evidence of substantial, pervasive, and relatively lasting distress in disaster-stricken communities, especially among more traumatized victims. Injury and life threat had the strongest effects, but financial and personal loss were also distressing” (Thompson et al., 1993, p. 614).

Building upon studies that found victims with higher levels of exposure to hazards often suffer greater psychological impacts, scholars sought to identify the different social factors that influence vulnerability (Brinkmann & Fernando, 2008; Bullard & Wright, 2009; 2012; Coch, 2015; Cutter, Boruff, & Shirley, 2003; Enarson, 2012; Fara, 2001; Lam, Arenas, Brito, & Liu, 2014; Peacock et al., 1997). Cutter et al. (2003) used 1990 county-level census data to create a social vulnerability index (SoVI) and illustrate the spatial nature of social vulnerability. The authors used a principal component factor analysis to reduce forty-two socioeconomic and demographic variables identified in research literature to eleven underlying independent factors (2003). The composite factors they identified included: personal wealth, age, density of built environment, single-sector economic dependence, housing stock and tenancy, race (specifically the percent of African Americans and Asians), ethnicity (specifically the percent of Hispanics and Native Americans), occupation, and infrastructure dependence (2003). Although Cutter et al. (2003) failed to find a positive correlation between presidential disaster declarations and the SoVI score, many studies, such as Finch, Emrich, and Cutter (2010) and Lam et al. (2014) used and further developed the SoVI to illustrate the spatial nature of social vulnerability in different contexts.

Lam et al. (2014) followed the lead of Cutter et al. (2003) to create a social vulnerability index applicable to twenty-five Caribbean countries. They modified the previous approach in

two important ways (Lam et al., 2014). First, Lam et al. (2014) used the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) definition of vulnerability, which encompasses a system's degree of exposure, degree of impact, and capacity to adapt to extreme events whereas Cutter et al. (2003) limited their conceptualization to socioeconomic factors. Second, the authors ran a regression analysis to determine the weight of each variable in predicting actual damage and used the resulting beta regression coefficients to weight the contribution of each variable (2014). Cutter et al. (2003) did not weight their variables. Lam et al. (2014) tested their index by conducting regression analyses between damage variables and their vulnerability index variables, which resulted in explaining 63% of the variance. While they view their index as a more accurate measure than the one developed by Cutter et al. (2003), Lam et al. (2014) recognize the limited comparability of their results to the twenty-five countries in their study. As a result of their model, the authors found low adaptive capacity as indicated by "low socioeconomic status, high electricity consumption, and low infrastructure development [played] a more important role [than storm exposure] in increasing vulnerability" (Lam et al., 2014, p. 477). Both SoVI indexes illustrate social conditions, such as class and race, and social decisions, such as density of the built environment, to a large extent determine which populations are most vulnerable to the impact of storm events (Cutter et al., 2003; Lam et al., 2014).

Coch (2015) used a different approach to understand and compare differences in vulnerability between regions in the United States. Coch (2015) conducted a case study using historical documentation to identify factors that increase the vulnerability of the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area to hurricane damage in comparison to southern regions of the country. His analysis illustrated how "meteorologic, geographic, oceanographic, and anthropogenic characteristics in the northeast magnify storm damage" (Coch, 2015, p. 210). However of the ten

variables he identifies as pivotal in determining hurricane-related death and damage, only three are anthropogenic: resident perception of risk, density of development, and preparation, in which he includes both mitigation and evacuation measures (Coch, 2015).

Other scholars limited their focus to the influence of strictly social characteristics on the impact of disaster outcomes for different places and subpopulations (Bullard & Wright, 2009; 2012; Enarson, 2012; Fara, 2001; Fothergill, 2004; Neumayer & Plümper, 2007; Peacock et al., 1997). These authors highlight the important roles race, class, gender, and age play in mitigating the impact of hazards. Neumayer and Plümper (2007) used data from the Emergency Disasters Database to analyze the impact of natural disasters on the life expectancy rates of women in comparison to men for 141 countries. They hypothesized that the life expectancy gap between men and women would increase in accordance with the magnitude of the event and as the socioeconomic status of women decreased (2007). Regression analyses confirmed their hypotheses and revealed that socioeconomic status is a major factor in the gendered effect of natural disasters (2007).

Fara (2001) also found poverty to be the major contributing factor to vulnerability in his qualitative study of communal land in Southern Namibia. Through extensive fieldwork, analysis of historical documents, and a literature review, Fara (2001) sought to understand the causes and processes that influence vulnerability to drought in Southern Namibia. His analysis revealed poverty to be the main cause of vulnerability to drought, and that Southern Namibia's poverty resulted from colonial practices and settlement patterns that persist to the present (2001). These practices institutionalized unequal access to land, education, transportation, infrastructure, and nutrition (2001). By historically contextualizing present-day poverty in Southern Namibia, Fara (2001) illustrated the structural and institutionalized nature of social vulnerability.

Bullard and Wright (2012) employ a similar qualitative approach to analyze the influence of race and class on the impact of disasters in the United States. With an environmental justice and social vulnerability framework, the authors examine governmental responses to African American communities in the South struck by natural and man-made disasters spanning eight decades (2012). To conduct their comparative case study, Bullard and Wright (2012) rely on in-depth qualitative interviews with residents in affected communities and document analysis of archival records and secondary sources. The phrase, “All communities are not created equal. Some communities are more equal than others,” echoes throughout their book (Bullard & Wright, 2012; p. 3). Their cases illustrate the disparate treatment African American communities receive in relation to white communities, which includes: less compensation for similar losses, increased risk and exposure to toxic contamination, longer timeframes for official recognition, notification, and clean up of environmental health hazards, and smaller penalties on those who pollute Black communities (2012). They conclude, “Race maps closely with pollution, vulnerability, and unequal protection”, which leads people of color to have high levels of distrust in the government’s willingness to protect and compensate their communities in times of disaster (Bullard & Wright, 2012, p. 232). Their analysis illustrates that social vulnerabilities influence the impact of disasters and the recovery trajectory of communities and individuals.

Research on post-disaster recovery identifies several factors, in addition to socioeconomic characteristics, that impact individual and community recovery trajectories. Post-disaster assistance plays a pivotal role in shaping recovery outcomes at the individual and community level (Kamel & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2004; Selimovi, 2011; Wang et al., 2012). Wang et al. (2012) constructed a quantitative survey to identify factors that contributed to differences in the cost and the length of the recovery process of rural households in China affected by the

Yao'an Earthquake. The authors used logistic regression to analyze the survey data they collected when conducting fieldwork in the affected region. Wang et al. (2012) found that family income, the quantity of assistance, and how quickly the assistance arrived had the greatest influence on the recovery trajectory of participant households. Households that received assistance quickly and in sufficient amounts to reconstruct their lives reported significantly shorter recovery times and costs than those households that did not receive immediate assistance or enough assistance to meet their needs (2012).

Kamel and Loukaitou-Sideris (2004) revealed how disaster assistance impacts neighborhood change. In a mixed-methods study, Kamel and Loukaitou-Sideris (2004) analyzed the implementation of post-disaster federal housing assistance programs in the case of the Northridge Earthquake, which struck Los Angeles, CA, in 1995. They sought to understand how neighborhood demographics and assistance affect the recovery process (2004). The authors analyzed government documents and conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with twenty-three program officials to understand the post-disaster federal housing assistance program objectives, eligibility requirements, and distributions of funds (2004). They followed the qualitative analysis with, "a series of regressions to test significance of housing and demographic variables in determining the distribution of assistance" (Kamel & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2004, p. 539). In a final step, they created an "assistance-damage ratio... by dividing the sum of all federal assistance from all programs in a zip code by the total damage reported in this zip code" (Kamel & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2004, p. 540). In confirmation with Bullard and Wright's (2012) findings, the authors found neighborhoods with majority minority populations had less access to assistance, which lead to neighborhood demographic changes (Kamel & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2004). Decreased access to housing assistance in minority neighborhoods decreased the available

housing and, thus, population within these neighborhoods as Los Angeles, CA, recovered (Kamel & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2004). Kamel and Loukaitou-Sideris's (2004) work emphasizes how post-disaster policies act to exacerbate social inequalities through unequal access and distribution of disaster recovery assistance.

In addition to understanding how vulnerabilities such as race or class impact disaster recovery, many scholars sought to understand if recovery improves the vulnerability of communities. Ingram et al. (2006) conducted a qualitative case study on the recovery of Sri Lanka following the 2004 tsunami. Specifically, the authors analyzed how the post-tsunami buffer zone policy, which prohibited the reconstruction of residential buildings along the coast, impacted "socioeconomic disparities, livelihoods, communities and the environment" (Ingram et al., 2006, p. 607). Ingram et al. (2006) found the buffer zone policy, which forced coastal communities to relocate, exacerbated long-term vulnerability. The authors conclude that tension and "confusion between [short-term and long-term recovery] objectives can delay the recovery process and increase vulnerability of affected populations" (Ingram et al., 2006, p. 612).

Mainka and McNeely (2011) continue the discussion of decreasing vulnerability during recovery by conducting a synthesis and review of existing disaster research. They "review... literature on previous disasters and lessons learned in the International Union for Conservation of Nature's experience working in the field on post-disaster environmental recovery to develop some principles for planning and action" in Haiti (Mainka & McNeely, 2011, p. 2). Mainka and McNeely (2011, p. 8) found proper pre-disaster ecosystem management has the ability to reduce the impact of natural disasters, and "in the recovery and restoration phases of humanitarian assistance, integrating ecosystem considerations can support sustainable development and reconstruction of the regions affected." While they echo Ingram et al.'s (2006) precaution that

recovery policies and processes can exacerbate vulnerabilities, Mainka and McNeely (2011) emphasize negative impacts on environmental not social vulnerability.

Chhotray and Few (2012) suggest a framework of continued vulnerability better describes post-disaster recovery efforts based on their qualitative case study of three villages in Orissa, India, struck by a super-cyclone in 1999. To explore the implementation of long-term recovery processes in the decade following the cyclone, the authors conducted forty-five unstructured conversations and thirty follow-up semi-structured interviews with community members, state officials, politicians, and key informants. In comparing villages from two sites with different distances from the coast, Chhotray and Few (2012, p. 700) reveal “an entrenched ongoing vulnerability remains, in which a combination of recurrent hazards, poor grassroots adaptive capacity and weak institutional support deeply undermines even recovery to a pre-hazard state, let alone a position of enhanced resilience.” The authors found a lack of viable livelihoods after storm-related salinity issues destroyed agriculture and a lack of suitable housing materials contributed to increased vulnerability of both sites to future storms (2012). Contrasting Wang et al.’s (2012) study on the Yao’an Earthquake in China, Chhotray and Few (2012) found state and NGO post-disaster assistance did little to improve the long-term recovery trajectories in India.

Christoplos et al. (2010) adopted a qualitative approach to understanding how and why social vulnerabilities remain when disaster recovery agents, both governmental and international aid organizations, frame recovery as the chance to improve socioeconomic conditions of impoverished, disaster-stricken areas. Christoplos et al. (2010) used Nicaragua’s recovery from Hurricane Mitch to analyze the impact of post-disaster recovery policies on social vulnerabilities. They combine, “a literature review, interviews with stakeholders at the national level, and field

studies in three municipalities that were heavily affected by Hurricane Mitch: Dipilto, San Francisco Libre, and Terrabona” (Christoplos et al., 2010, p. S203). Their study found that even though government officials and other actors framed recovery efforts as an opportunity to create a better, safer country, authorities knew they lacked the finances to implement projects that would reduce social vulnerabilities (2010). As such, officials chose not to pursue research on methods to decrease vulnerability and, in terms of social vulnerability, little improved as a result of Hurricane Mitch (2010). This suggests intentions are not enough to alleviate social vulnerabilities through disaster recovery processes and that the rhetoric of recovery may not match the outcomes.

Le Masson (2015) echoes this stance in her qualitative study of Ladakh, India. Through a combination of secondary document analysis and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with: flood victims; residents; government, development organizations, and community stakeholders; and local, national, and international NGO senior management and field workers, Le Masson (2015) examines government and NGO disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies and practices to understand the extent to which these entities incorporate and address social vulnerabilities in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery activities. She found, “The way vulnerability is conceived in policies and practices at each level of decision-making remains strongly influenced by the dominant approach to disasters” with a “focus on hazards, exposure, infrastructure, or the lack of awareness of at-risk populations, rather than tackling the root causes of people’s vulnerability and drawing on existing local knowledge and capacity” (Le Masson, 2015, p. 113). Although government officials expressed the desire to incorporate community-based approaches to reduce social vulnerabilities, they had not acted to incorporate DRR best practices into disaster preparedness, response, or recovery plans (2015). Le Masson (2015, p. 113) indicated that NGOs

and local officials employed appropriate post-disaster DRR practices but continued to rely on “top-down, hazard-focused” preparedness strategies that previous research has shown to exacerbate social vulnerability. Ultimately, Le Masson’s (2015, p. 104) research revealed that, “establishing policies does not guarantee that appropriate practices will follow.”

Pais and Elliot (2008) approached post-disaster recovery and continued vulnerability with an alternative theoretical perspective, which shifts from viewing continued vulnerability as an unintended consequence to framing it as intentional to maintain power relations. They applied Logan and Moloth’s (2007) growth machine theory to analyze place-based recovery (Pais & Elliot, 2008). The authors selected four regions in the United States hit by major hurricanes in the 1990s and ran a regression analysis on 1990 and 2000 census data to determine if population, housing, and in-migration increased or decreased at the census tract level between surveys (2008). Pais and Elliot (2008) found that the selected regions experienced an increase in population, housing, and in-migration between surveys that exceeded pre-storm levels and that post-disaster growth is spatially uneven, which supports their assertion that most reconstruction efforts do not challenge or improve social vulnerabilities. They conclude by suggesting,

“Inserting this perspective into disaster studies moves us beyond the simple recognition that some groups are more vulnerable to environmental hazards than others to illuminate how this vulnerability is generated by ongoing and unequal struggles over local development. In turn, it also raises the question of how these struggles change after a major disaster hits, as competing interests respond to opportunities created by the damage, displacement and rebuilding that ensues, that is, as the local growth machine transforms into a recovery machine” (Pais & Elliot, 2008, p. 1418-1419).

Using a growth machine framework illuminates the competing interests and imbalances in power between social groups that characterize most urban communities. This in turn highlights how post-disaster recovery practices that reinforce inequality serve the interests of society’s most

powerful actors (Pais & Elliot, 2008). Pais and Elliot (2008) illustrated that continued vulnerability is profitable for some sectors of society. The next section examines the social vulnerability of New Orleans in the context of Hurricane Katrina's impact and recovery.

Unequal Impact of Hurricane Katrina

Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, LA, on August 29, 2005, and caused catastrophic damage when levees broke and flooded eighty percent of the city. In a Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report for Congress, Gabe et al. (2005) conducted a descriptive statistical analysis to determine the demographic characteristics of Hurricane Katrina's victims. The analysis compared victim demographics to those of the affected areas and presented the data by geographical region, providing victim characteristics for Orleans Parish alone. The report revealed African-Americans represented 73% of those displaced but only 67% of the city's population based on 2000 census data (Gabe et al., 2005, p. 16). Poverty rates among the displaced also surpassed those of the population as a whole in the areas affected (2005). Gabe et al. (2005) estimated 34% of displaced African American residents from New Orleans lived in poverty in comparison to 19. 6% in the state of Louisiana, 21. 4% in storm-damaged areas of Louisiana, and 14. 6% of non-Black displaced residents from New Orleans (Gabe et al., 2005, p. 17). Their results indicated that Hurricane Katrina disproportionately impacted poor, African-Americans in Orleans Parish (2005).

Cutter and Emrich's (2006) socio-spatial analysis of Hurricane Katrina's impact arrived at similar conclusions as Gabe et al. (2005). Using the SoVI created by Cutter et al.(2003) and decennial census data from 1960 to 2000, Cutter and Emrich (2006) compare changes in the social vulnerability of all counties affected by Hurricane Katrina. Their analysis ranked Orleans Parish as the most vulnerable of all counties affected by the storm and the only county in the

New Orleans metro to increase in social vulnerability between 1960 and 2000, which “indicates that not only do the persons living in Orleans Parish generally have less ability to cope with major natural disasters than their counterparts in the other parishes, but they also have less ability to rebound from catastrophe than they did in 1960” (Cutter & Emrich, 2006, p. 108). Their model attributed the high level of social vulnerability within Orleans Parish and the entire metro area to race, class, and gender (2006). Their analysis highlighted that Orleans parish residents, particularly the poor, African Americans, and women, possessed less ability to respond to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 than they had to respond to Hurricane Betsy in 1965 (2006).

In addition to identifying the most vulnerable victims, scholars studied the impact of Hurricane Katrina on evacuee mental and physical health (Adeola & Picou, 2012; 2014; Mortensen, Wilson, and Ho, 2009). Mortensen et al. (2009) studied the mental and physical health of New Orleans evacuees in Houston, TX, as well as their access to healthcare. The authors conducted three waves of self-administered surveys on different non-random convenience samples of evacuees (2009). The authors solicited participants for the successive rounds of surveys at shelters, hotels, and apartment complexes immediately following, two months, and one year after Hurricane Katrina, respectively (2009). The authors employed quota-sampling techniques to ensure equal numbers of male and female respondents, but their sample included predominately low-income and unemployed African Americans who reported problems accessing health care (2009). Mortensen et al. (2009, p. 524) found nearly sixty percent of respondents experienced negative mental health symptoms, including: “nervousness, restlessness, worthlessness, hopelessness, and spells of terror or panic at least a few times a week” with twenty-eight percent reporting a decrease in mental and physical health as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

In contrast to Mortensen et al. (2009), Adeola and Picou (2012; 2014) surveyed residents in Louisiana and Mississippi that never left or returned within three years of the storm. Adeola and Picou (2012; 2014) used random digit dialing (RDD) telephone survey data collected in the spring of 2008 by the University of South Alabama polling group to determine the relationship between race, social capital, and the physical and mental health consequences of Hurricane Katrina on victims. A binary logistic regression analysis indicated, “gender (female), older age, and lack of social capital significantly predict[ed] the odds of [physical] Katrina-related health problems” (Adeola & Picou, 2012, p. 10). Multivariate discriminant and ordinary least squares regression analyses showed that residents from both states reported significant levels of psychosocial stress and depression with respondents in Louisiana exhibiting the highest mean scores for all indicators but one (Adeola & Picou, 2014). “Other socio-demographic variables such as being African American, female, elderly, and having social capital deficits were the most important determinants of depression and psychosocial distress consequences of exposure to Katrina” (Adeola & Picou, 2014, p. 142). In both studies, Adeola and Picou (2012; 2014) found that African Americans reported higher rates of Katrina-induced physical and mental health issues than white respondents, and “the lack of social capital result[ed] in chronic mental health impacts for survivors of catastrophes such as Katrina” (Adeola & Picou, 2014, p. 143). Their findings build upon Mortensen et al.'s (2009) study because they indicate that even after returning to their pre-Katrina county of residence evacuees continued to exhibit negative health consequences three years after Hurricane Katrina (Adeola & Picou, 2012; 2014). Lacking access to proper health care and other important material resources, disadvantaged populations often rely on social networks to meet their needs (Desmond, 2012; Domínguez & Watkins, 2003; Miller-Cribbs & Farber, 2008; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004; Stack, 1974).

Social networks play a large role in the survival mechanisms socially vulnerable populations employ to meet daily needs in non-disaster situations (Desmond, 2012; Domínguez & Watkins, 2003; Miller-Cribbs & Farber, 2008; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004; Stack, 1974). In an ethnographic study of low-income African American kinship networks, Stack (1974) found that poor, African Americans relied upon complex, organized networks comprised of friends and family in order to survive on incomes drastically below the poverty line. Recent scholars explored how social networks changed over time to rely less on the kin networks explored by Stack (1974), which require a high level of reciprocity that many of today's impoverished families cannot provide due to chronic poverty (Desmond, 2012; Domínguez & Watkins, 2003; Miller-Cribbs & Farber, 2008; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004). Through ethnographic interviews and participant-observation of five African American and five Latin American low-income mothers with children in high poverty neighborhoods in the Boston metropolitan area, Domínguez and Watkins (2003) found the social networks of African-American and Latin-American mothers tend to incorporate more social service organizations than in the past because appropriate reciprocity is limited and does not require sharing scarce material resources. Miller-Cribbs and Farber (2008, p. 43), “review historical and contemporary research on the structure and function of African American kin networks.” Their analysis revealed the ability of kin networks to provide necessary resources and support dwindled overtime due to chronic poverty. Desmond (2012, p. 1296) conducted a “yearlong ethnographic study, living in two low-income Milwaukee neighborhoods – a majority-white trailer park and a majority-Black inner-city neighborhood – and follow[ed] tenants evicted from their apartments.” Desmond (2012) contends today’s urban residents rely on weak, disposable ties among strangers rather than on kin to make ends meet.

As in non-disaster situations, social networks are an important means of survival following disaster. Several scholars studied the role social networks served as survivors coped with social vulnerabilities during Hurricane Katrina and the changes that followed (see Elliot et al., 2010; Fussell, 2006; 2012; Litt, 2008; 2012; Litt et al., 2012). In a theoretical piece published shortly after Hurricane Katrina, Fussell (2006) described the ability and importance of social networks to expand access to resources in times when survival depends on personal resources. Using qualitative interviews with fifty-seven low-income mothers with at least one dependent child, Fussell (2012) studied the capacity of social networks to assist and support members during disaster situations. From her study, she concluded, “differential vulnerability to disaster is compounded as a result of the concentration of vulnerable groups within social networks” (Fussell, 2012, p. 164).

Litt (2008; 2012) provides a powerful example of network capacity in the context of Hurricane Katrina. Litt’s (2008; 2012) qualitative study illustrated the power and ingenuity of women’s networks in times of crisis to work together to keep people safe. Using in-depth qualitative interviews, the study explored the process by which two poor, Black women mobilized their social network to evacuate more than twenty-five people to Baton Rouge before the storm and how their network continued to operate during displacement (Litt, 2008; 2012). Litt (2008) found the authority carried within informal networks versus that of government sources influenced the success of these networks to aid in pre-event evacuation. However, not all networks are capable of meeting the post-disaster needs of vulnerable populations (Elliot et al., 2010; Litt et al., 2012).

Elliot et al. (2010), Fussell (2012), and Litt et al. (2012) emphasize social networks vary in the capacity to provide resources and support during disasters and recovery. Elliot et al. (2010)

conducted a comparative analysis to understand recovery in unequal contexts. Using phone interview survey data with ninety respondents from the Lower 9th Ward and eighty-nine respondents from Lakeview, the authors found differences in social networks and social capital created different post-Katrina recovery outcomes for Lakeview, an affluent, white neighborhood, and the Lower 9th Ward, a poor, African-American neighborhood (Elliot et al., 2010). Their analysis revealed a cumulative effect of inequality, which increased the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged neighborhoods overtime (2010). Litt et al. (2012) concluded after years of following the participants in their qualitative study that women's networks vary in their ability to absorb disaster situations. They asserted, “. . . improv[ing] the current tragedy in New Orleans – demands policy that *simultaneously* builds infrastructure and supports women in creating network strength” (Litt et al., 2012, p. 140, emphasis in original).

In the context of post-Katrina recovery, several scholars examined the extent of demographic change as a result of the storm (Bankston, III, 2010; Finch et al., 2010; Groen & Polivka, 2010; Myers, Slack, & Singelmann, 2008; Stevenson, Emrich, Mitchell, & Cutter, 2010; Watkins & Hagelman, III, 2011) and linked those changes to discriminatory disaster recovery policies (Gotham; 2014; 2015; Gotham & Campanella, 2013). Other scholars analyzed the multiple recovery planning processes New Orleans city government implemented after Hurricane Katrina that bred uncertainty and restricted citizen participation (see Ehrenfeucht & Nelson, 2011; Nelson et al., 2007; Williamson, 2007).

To examine socio-spatial aspects of recovery in the New Orleans metro after Hurricane Katrina, Myers et al. (2008) examined the relationship between social vulnerability and migration trends from July 1, 2005 to July 1, 2006 in the 117 counties eligible for FEMA individual and public assistance due to hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Expanding upon Cutter et

al.'s (2003) social vulnerability index, Myers et al. (2008, p. 280) use similar methods to create a regional SoVI for the Gulf Coast and identify five dimensions of social vulnerability: disadvantaged populations, less developed, density of built environment, elderly populations, and dependent populations. A regression analysis found areas with higher rates of socially vulnerable populations and housing damage had significantly higher rates of outmigration (2008). These populations tended to “spillover” into the surrounding counties with lower rates of social vulnerability and housing damage, which experienced in-migration (Myers et al., 2008, p. 286). The “spillover” pattern created geographic clustering (Myers et al., 2008, p. 286). This suggests that socially vulnerable populations in areas that sustain higher levels of housing damage typically do not return to their pre-storm county of residence.

Stevenson et al. (2010) and Finch et al. (2010) also found recovery produced uneven spatial clustering. The authors laid residential construction building permit site locations in Bay St. Louis, Pass Christian, and Long Beach, Mississippi, over GIS maps with damage polygons created by the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency for FEMA after Hurricane Katrina (Stevenson et al., 2010, p. 61). Using Spatial Scan Statistic 8.0, which does not assume the existence or location of clusters, Stevenson et al. (2010) found severity of damages and the amount of housing highly correlated with when and where clusters emerged between October 2005 and May 2008, with the earliest clusters forming in 2005 in heavily damaged coastal areas and no damage areas further inland in Long Beach.

Similarly, Finch et al. (2010) studied the spatial recovery of post-Katrina New Orleans from June 2005 to June 2008. Rather than building permits, Finch et al. (2010) used U. S. postal service data on active residential addresses and aggregated the data to facilitate comparison with census tract level flood depth and social vulnerability data. The authors found vulnerability and

the extent of damage impacted the rate of neighborhood recovery. Unexpectedly, they found neighborhoods in the middle of the vulnerability spectrum lagged the most in recovery because they lack the resources of wealthy neighborhoods yet fail to qualify for government assistance designed for the most vulnerable (Finch et al., 2010). Using a regression model to test the significance of the Road Home program on recovery, Finch et al. (2010) identified Road Home sales as a significant predictor, but not Road Home repair grants. From their study they “conclude[d] that the Road Home program has not stimulated recovery and in many communities (e. g., Lower Ninth Ward and New Orleans East) has provided an additional challenge to those wishing to return” (Finch et al., 2010, p. 199). Together, these studies indicate that recovery is often unevenly distributed spatially and that vulnerable populations require assistance and adequate policy measures to enable their communities to return and rebuild (Finch et al., 2010; Myers et al., 2008; Stevenson et al., 2010).

Adding to the discussion of socio-spatial change in post-Katrina recovery, Bankston, III (2010) and Ehrenfeucht and Nelson (2013) seek to contextualize demographic change after Hurricane Katrina. Bankston, III (2010) conducted a historical analysis of demographic changes in New Orleans from 1810 to 2009 using U. S. census data. He situated post-Katrina demographic changes within the larger demographic trends to emphasize continuity in population loss (2010). The analysis illustrated New Orleans consistently lost population through outmigration from 1970 to the present (2010). As such, Bankston, III (2010) encouraged city officials to adopt recovery plans and policies that fit a shrinking economic base. Ehrenfeucht and Nelson (2013) use qualitative interviews to understand how newcomers view their role in the recovery of the city. The authors conducted seventy-eight semi-structured interviews with young and mid-career professional who came to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina (2013). They

found most respondents viewed their role in post-Katrina change as limited to their influence on the culture of the city and did not recognize their social and political impact (Ehrenfeucht & Nelson, 2013). In this, respondents failed to see how recovery plans improved the city to attract newcomers rather than to facilitate the return of displaced residents (2013). Ehrenfeucht and Nelson (2013) revealed the often overlooked social and political ripples that flow from demographic change.

In addition to studying how the city changed after Hurricane Katrina, Nelson et al. (2007), Williamson (2007) and Ehrenfeucht and Nelson (2011) examined the recovery planning process of New Orleans. These studies highlighted the multiple, complex planning processes the city underwent to strategize how to rebuild from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and the levee failure. Nelson et al. (2007) conducted a qualitative case study to analyze four different planning processes enacted after the storm and found two major tensions in the planning process slowed down the city's recovery. First, the planning process had to overcome the need to quickly develop a plan with the need to carefully consider all options before deciding upon a course of action (2007). Secondly, tension developed between the relative value given to professional versus resident opinions in the creation of recovery priorities (2007).

Rather than analyzing the totality of the planning process, Williamson's (2007) qualitative case study focused upon resident participation in the Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP), one of the four recovery plans examined by Nelson et al. (2007). The author conducted semi-structured, in-depth qualitative interviews with twenty key community stakeholders and leaders during the week before the final Community Congress, a public forum to discuss the plan (2007). Williamson (2007) found community leaders and officials viewed resident participation as a strategy to build public support in the plan. Drawing on Arnstein's (1969) *Ladder of Citizen*

Participation, Williamson (2007) concluded citizen participation in UNOP amounted to little more than tokenism. Through an in-depth analysis of the post-disaster planning process, Ehrenfeucht and Nelson (2011) found the multiple planning processes created confusion and uncertainty among residents. In addition, minority distrust of government agencies undermined the planning process (2011). They also described citizen participation in the planning process as tokenism and proposed the incorporation of meaningful citizen participation could improve post-disaster recovery planning processes (2011). Privileging professional opinions over resident input in the planning process could explain why post-disaster recovery plans met the needs of newcomers more so long-term or displaced residents (Ehrenfeucht & Nelson, 2013).

Analysis of the planning process illustrated a lack of concern with the voice of residents struggling to rebuild (Ehrenfeucht & Nelson, 2011; Nelson et al., 2007; Williamson, 2007). Analyses of the recovery policies implemented at the federal, state, and local level contextualize the policy decisions and identify the impact of different policy measures, like Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and the Road Home program on the city's recovery trajectory (Gotham, 2014; 2015). Gotham (2014; 2015) and Tierney (2015) linked post-Katrina disaster policies to neoliberal ideologies that favor decentralization, privatization of public services, and public-private partnerships. Both indicated the policies further entrenched social vulnerabilities (Gotham, 2014; 2015; Tierney, 2015).

Drawing on eight years of qualitative and quantitative data collection, Gotham (2014) conducted an in-depth case study analysis on the Louisiana Road Home Program to evaluate its long-term impact. Gotham (2014, p. 786) framed "the Road Home Program as a racialized state rescaling strategy" that "had disruptive and destabilizing effects on prospects for community recovery." His analysis revealed structural racism perpetuated through colorblind language

(Gotham, 2014). Situated within the history of federally mandated discriminatory housing practices that limited the mobility of African Americans and depressed values in their neighborhoods, Gotham (2014) shows the arbitrary decision to base housing assistance awards on pre-storm value rather than estimated repair cost replicated pre-storm racial and class disparities. African American homeowners received lesser amounts than white homeowners with homes of similar size with comparable damage; in addition, the program favored owner-occupied dwellings over rental units, which limited the ability of renters to return (2014).

In his analysis Gotham (2014) identified one mechanism that produced the disparate impacts Bullard and Wright (2012) found in their research on eighty years of government response to disasters in African American communities. Within Bullard and Wright's (2012) research, the governmental response to Hurricane Katrina appears typical. Gotham (2014; 2015) and Bullard and Wright (2009; 2012) conclude that the policy decisions need to explicitly address racial differences in order to stop perpetuating historic racial disparities through post-disaster recovery measures. These studies provide an example of how post-disaster recovery strategies became a barrier in the recovery process for African American communities.

A Gap in the Literature

A large body of research by social scientists exists on the topic of Hurricane Katrina, the levee failure, and New Orleans. This research touches on many aspects of the storm's impact and subsequent recovery process. The literature indicates who suffered the most in New Orleans as the result of man-made vulnerabilities. In disparate impact and rates of recovery, the research agrees that the African American community of New Orleans suffered the worst extent of damages and received the least from policy measures aimed to aid recovery (Cutter & Finch, 2006; Elliot et al., 2010; Finch et al., 2010; Gabe et al., 2005; Gotham, 2014; 2015). As the most

impacted, the African American community standpoint, developed during a contentious recovery process, may hold insights into policy barriers in the disaster recovery process. Understanding the needs of those most affected with the least ability to cope will illuminate how policy makers can improve conditions within the city of New Orleans and use Orleans Parish recovery as a template for other urban areas struck by natural phenomena.

This study adds another dimension to the literature available in the field. It fills the gap of how residents view the effects and challenges of the storm and of the recovery process. As a qualitative project, it provides an opportunity to hear resident voices and opinions in the context of recovery. This project offers insight into how those most affected frame the struggle to return and what obstacles they encountered.

Another oversight within the literature is the attempt to isolate specific barriers from all other obstacles to understand the effects of one variable at a time. This reductionist approach minimizes the monumental task of returning to post-Katrina New Orleans, where families did not have the option to deal with only one hurdle at a time. An intersectional perspective, informed by Crenshaw's (1991) concept of political intersectionality, allows the opportunity to examine the structural challenges as interwoven and inseparable from each other in the process of return (Choo & Ferree, 2010). This approach is necessary to understand the full impact of the storm and subsequent policy decisions on African Americans because it analyzes the entirety of their struggles to return and recover from Hurricane Katrina.

Research Design

Research Questions

To gain a deeper understanding of the process to return, this qualitative study seeks to explore how African Americans frame obstacles to return to post-Katrina New Orleans.

Additional research questions are: How do these obstacles affect the decision-making process?

How are these obstacles overcome? What is needed to facilitate return? How do participants and the media frame race, class, and gender in the context of return?

Research Design: A Qualitative Case Study

The research question determines the appropriate research design for any study (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Yin, 2009). Researchers can use different approaches to explore how African Americans frame obstacles to return to post-Katrina New Orleans depending on what they hope to learn and what resources they have to conduct the study. This section begins by discussing the research design for this project before addressing strengths and weaknesses of the study. It concludes by discussing the strengths and weaknesses of an alternative approach.

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore the decision-making process of African Americans displaced from New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina. Qualitative research creates an in-depth examination of social phenomena rather than a statistical description (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2007). Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 4) describe, “Qualitative researchers [as] study[ing] things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.” Babbie (2004, p. 307) highlights several strengths of qualitative research, including its ability to reveal “subtle nuances in attitudes and behavior and [to examine] social processes over time.” This project seeks to uncover the nuanced

decision-making process of displaced African Americans and how they framed obstacles to return. Furthermore, the researcher hopes to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between individual agency and structural changes following Hurricane Katrina (Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens, 1984). To explore these questions, a qualitative approach is appropriate.

Qualitative researchers use different strategies to investigate social phenomena. Creswell (2007) describes five different approaches: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study; but he acknowledges scholars classify qualitative research differently across disciplines. As a strategy of inquiry, a case study allows the in-depth examination of a specific issue via one or more cases over a specified time frame using multiple means of data collection (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). Yin (2009, p. 18) offers the following definition of the case study method:

“1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

2. The case study inquiry copes with the technically distractive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis.”

Yin (2009, p. 19) differs from Creswell (2007) by depicting the case study as more than “just a form of ‘qualitative research.’” Although he finds scholars critical of the case study method tend to conflate it with a form of data collection, Yin (2009, p. 19) views the case study as a research method that allows both “quantitative and qualitative evidence.” Incorporating data from multiple sources collected via different methods creates a detailed, multifaceted understanding of the social phenomenon illustrated by the selected case (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009).

Case study research can focus on a single case or include multiple cases (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). Scholars ascribe different names and purposes to studies involving single and multiple cases. Creswell (2007) uses the term *collective case study* while Yin (2009) refers to the *comparative case method*. The comparative case study method creates more compelling and robust studies by providing evidence of the ability to replicate the findings across different cases while single case studies highlight “(a) a critical test of existing theory, (b) a rare or unique circumstance, or (c) a representative or typical case, or where the case serves a (d) regulatory or (e) longitudinal purpose” (Yin, 2009, p. 52). Yin (2009) contends multiple case studies are undertaken to support reliability of findings on the basis of replication. Creswell (2007) acknowledges Yin’s (2009) emphasis on replication but stresses it as a replication of procedure not a replication of results. To Creswell (2007), scholars design collective case studies to use the same procedures to illuminate different aspects of a single research topic or social phenomenon.

This project aligns with Creswell’s (2007) concept of a collective case study because it uses the same process to compare three cases with different outcomes to provide an in-depth examination of African American decision-making following Hurricane Katrina. To understand how displaced African American residents frame obstacles to return to post-Katrina New Orleans and how obstacles change over time, this study compares the decision-making processes of displaced residents: (1) who returned, (2) who remain displaced in Houston, Texas, and (3) who relocated to Houston after returning to New Orleans for more than six months. Comparing these three cases will illuminate how obstacles changed over time as well as what some African Americans may need to live in post-Katrina New Orleans. Using multiple cases also allows the study to compare the various states of return and displacement in which residents continue to exist more than ten years after Hurricane Katrina.

Methods

To investigate the decision-making process of African Americans following Hurricane Katrina, this case study collects two types of data through two different methods. Creswell (2007, p. 129) describes four main types of qualitative data: “observations (ranging from nonparticipant to participant), interviews (ranging from close-ended to open-ended), documents (ranging from private to public), and audiovisual materials (including materials such as photographs, compact disks, and videotapes).” Rather than dividing data into four categories, Yin (2009, p. 98) states evidence originates, “...from six sources: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts.” The research approach often influences the forms of data included in a particular study (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2007; Seidman, 2006). For example, narrative, phenomenology, and grounded theory approaches rely heavily on interviews while ethnography incorporates observations in conjunction with interviews (Creswell, 2007; Seidman, 2006). Case studies may draw upon all of these to create an in-depth depiction of each case (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). This project relies primarily on open-ended, qualitative interviews with displaced and returned African American residents and documents, specifically local and national news articles on New Orleans recovery.

Qualitative interviews are different than other types of interviews, such as survey research interviews (Babbie, 2004; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Seidman, 2006). According to Seidman (2006, p. 9), “At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience.” Babbie (2004, p. 309) describes qualitative interviews as “a guided conversation” as opposed to “a search for specific information.” Survey interviews tend to be highly structured; for example, most require interviewers to phrase questions identically to all participants in order to reduce interviewer

influence on the study (Babbie, 2004). In contrast, qualitative interviews tend to be less structured, which allows for the exploration of participants' thoughts and attitudes on the interview topics (Babbie, 2004; Seidman, 2006). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to explore topics that arise during the interview while open-ended questions allow respondents to recount their experiences in their own words (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Seidman, 2006).

Seidman (2006, p.13) acknowledges “a research method ideally is determined by what one is trying to learn” but continues to suggest “some researchers and scholars see the choice as a political and moral one.” To understand how displaced African Americans frame obstacles to return, this study draws upon semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions conducted by the researcher. While the method suits the focus of the project, the decision to examine the decision-making process of African Americans through their own words is political and moral in the theoretical context of the study. Feminist theory, critical race theory, and critical and ingenious methodologies all stress the importance of allowing marginalized communities to tell their own stories as a means of empowerment and as a way to create counter narratives that describe their experiences and the meanings they attribute to those experiences (Collins, 1991; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008; Donovan, 2000; Su, 1998/2000).

In addition to qualitative interviews, the study proposes to analyze media narratives of post-Katrina New Orleans through conducting a content analysis. Babbie (2004, p. 314) describes content analysis as “the study of recorded human communications, such as books, Web sites, paintings, and laws.” Content analysis seeks to answer, “Who says what, to whom, why, how, and with what effect?” (Babbie, 2004, p. 314). This method can be used in qualitative or quantitative studies and has several strengths, including: its economical use of time and money;

its relatively easy and inexpensive ability to reproduce a portion of the study if mistakes occur; its ability to address long-term processes; and its unobtrusive nature, meaning the analyst rarely affects the data (Babbie, 2004, p. 323-324). However, content analysis is limited in that it only works for studying recorded communications and that it raises questions of validity and reliability depending on how the data is coded (2004). These limitations will be discussed further in the following sections.

To perform a content analysis, the researcher will collect local and national media articles concerning the recovery of New Orleans. This will involve performing a database search to find articles that describe (1) the process of return for African American residents, (2) housing, education, employment, and healthcare policy changes implemented after Hurricane Katrina, or (3) the general state of recovery of post-Katrina New Orleans. The project incorporates the content analysis of media articles based on the preliminary findings of a pilot study, which found the media influenced experiences with disaster assistance and perspectives of recovery. In addition, the content analysis may allow the emergence of additional obstacles to return not discussed in the interviews and provide the opportunity for data triangulation (Babbie, 2004; Yin, 2009). The next section discusses the selection of research participants for the study.

Sampling

In addition to how the data is collected, the research design also determines the appropriate means of sampling (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2003; 2007; Fowler, Jr., 2009). Sampling is a strategy by which researchers select research subjects to study the phenomenon in question (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2007). There are many different ways to construct research samples and different levels at which to sample (Creswell, 2007; Seidman, 2006). Quantitative studies typically rely on probability sampling, which uses different mechanisms to randomly

select research participants (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2003; Field, 2013; Fowler, Jr., 2009; Sirkin, 1999). If a random sample is representative of the population, then the results can typically be generalized to the larger population (Babbie, 2004; Field, 2013; Fowler, Jr., 2009; Sirkin, 1999). Qualitative researchers use alternative sampling methods that do not rely on probability theory, which limits the ability of qualitative findings to be generalized to a larger population (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2003).

As opposed to random sampling, qualitative research relies on purposefully constructing samples “to elucidate the particular, the specific” (Creswell, 2007, p. 126). There are many strategies associated with purposive sampling (Seidman, 2006). Babbie (2004) discusses quota sampling, where researchers limit participants to create a sample that is representative of the larger population, and snowball sampling, where participants refer the researcher to future participants. Seidman (2006) and Creswell (2007) identify several more, including: maximum variation, homogenous, critical case, theory based, confirming/disconfirming cases, snowball or chain, extreme or deviant case, typical case, intensity, politically important, random purposeful, stratified purposeful, criterion, opportunistic, combination or mixed, and convenience sampling (Creswell, 2007, p. 127). Creswell (2007) encourages qualitative researchers to combine strategies as necessary to meet the needs of the research approach and the project.

This study combined a few techniques to create a purposive sample. The project sampled at two levels, the city and the individual. Nearly every state sheltered Hurricane Katrina evacuees following the levee failure (Weber & Peek, 2012). Constraints on resources required selecting one city in which to interview displaced African American residents. The researcher selected Houston, TX, because it sheltered the largest number of African American evacuees after the storm and offered federal disaster assistance that other cities did not (Weber & Peek, 2012; Bliss,

2015). To select individual participants, the project relies on maximum variation. This approach maximizes the differences among participants in order to increase the possibility for different perspectives and experiences to emerge (Seidman, 2006; Creswell, 2007). The study also used snowball sampling to find participants.

In qualitative studies, sample size is determined by saturation and sufficiency (Seidman, 2006). Saturation is reached when interviews stop revealing new information (Yin, 2009). Sufficiency refers to including enough voices to reflect the range of possible (2009). The study includes seventeen participants, which meets the standards of a small case study (Seidman, 2006; Yin, 2009). The initial sampling strategy planned for five participants in each category that represented a variety of voices. Due to difficulties locating participants who relocated to Houston after returning to post-Katrina New Orleans, there are fewer participants in the third case with less variation in demographic characteristics.

Data

The data for this project consists of two rounds of interviews four to five years apart. The first round of interviews took place between August 2011 and February 2012 with seventeen participants that self-identified as an African American displaced from New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina. All participants were over eighteen at the time of the interview, but two participants were minors at the time of the storm. All participants had an annual household income of less than \$200,000 before the disaster. The researcher administered all interviews face-to-face and audio recorded them. Six respondents chose to be video recorded as well. Qualitative interview best practices stress setting interview length between sixty to ninety minutes to allow enough time to cover topics in depth without lasting so long as to be taxing on the participant (Creswell, 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Seidman, 2006). When engaged in

answering a question at the sixty-minute mark, the researcher pursued the questioning until an appropriate concluding point. The researcher interviewed most participants alone and only once. Two participants that shared an initial interview required second interviews because they did not finish within the allotted time. Three other participants, an aunt and her two nieces, shared a two-hour interview. They did not require follow up interviews.

The second round of interviews took place from May to August 2016. The researcher conducted follow-up interviews with fourteen of the seventeen participants. Two participants could not be reached and one participant failed to answer the phone at the scheduled interview time. One other participant only completed half of the interview questions due to time constraints and scheduling conflicts. This interview was included because qualitative research does not require asking the same questions (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2007). The researcher conducted three interviews face to face in the New Orleans. The remaining eleven interviews took place via phone. Two participants completed the interview process across two conversations. The researcher audio recorded the interviews and paid a professional transcriber to transcribe them verbatim. The researcher double checked the transcripts and corrected any discrepancies between the audio recording and the written transcript. The interviews ranged from thirty to ninety minutes. The follow-up interviews sought to understand how participants' lives changed since the initial interviews and their view of New Orleans recovery.

Case one included five participants who returned to New Orleans. The sample included two women and three men between 14 and 56 years old at the time of the storm. Two owned homes; the other three rented. Three lived in New Orleans; two returned to the metro areas of Metairie and Slidell. Of these participants, the researcher identified one as middle class and the other four as working class. The earliest participant to return moved back in January of 2006, and

the last returned in November of 2011. The researcher conducted all interviews in the New Orleans metro between July 2011 and February 2012.

For case two, the researcher interviewed nine participants residing in the Houston metro that never returned to live in New Orleans. Six participants were women, and three were men. The researcher identified two as middle-class and the remaining six as working-class. Seven rented, and two owned their home. Participants ranged from 13 to 38 years old at the time of Hurricane Katrina. The researcher conducted the interviews in Houston between September 2011 and January 2012. Two participants shared an interview with their family member in case one, which took place in Slidell, LA, in January 2012.

Case three included three participants who relocated to Houston after they returned to live in New Orleans for over a year. All three were male homeowners that the researcher identified as middle class. Their ages ranged from 30 to 42 years old at the time of the storm. The longest period of living in New Orleans spanned five years from October of 2005 until September of 2010. The shortest lasted for eighteen months between 2007 to 2009. The researcher interviewed two participants in Houston in September and November of 2011. The third participant chose to schedule his interview during a visit to New Orleans in January of 2011.

Commitments to Participants

The researcher made several commitments to the participants including confidentiality. One participant asked to remain anonymous, so the researcher randomly assigned aliases to everyone. The researcher also promised to give respondents their interview transcripts, a DVD of their interview (if opted to be video recorded), and the final report. In addition, participants must grant permission for the researcher to use the interviews for any other project. Participants

received twenty dollars in cash at the start of each interview in the first round and a twenty dollar money order by mail for participating in the second round of interviews.

Case 1 Descriptions: Participants that Returned to New Orleans

Shawn Jackson. At the time of the disaster, Shawn Jackson, a 35-year old working class renter, worked at Tulane University Hospital. When his 18 year-old daughter refused to evacuate with his 1-year-old grandson, he stayed although he had packed and planned to leave. They sheltered-in-place in an empty third floor apartment in the St. Bernard Public Housing Development with his daughter's aunts and their families. After the flooding, they devised a way to float to a nearby overpass, but the helicopter rescue crew only took women and children. Separated from his family, he walked to New Orleans International Airport, where attendants evacuated him by plane to Atlanta, GA. He stayed for a month to help his mother get settled before he relocated to Houston for disaster housing assistance. In Houston, he reunited with his daughter and grandson. He stayed the same apartment in Houston until November 2011 when he returned to help his daughter raise his grandson. In February 2012, he was looking for work, living with his daughter and her two children (now 7-year-old grandson and 10-month-old granddaughter) in her grandmother's renovated house. I met him through his aunt, the administrative assistant at the University of New Orleans. In 2016, his aunt reported he had relocated to Phoenix, AZ. He could not be reached for a follow-up interview.

Steven Bell. In 2005, Steven Bell, a 44-year-old middle class truck driver, lived with his companion of many years, her daughter, and her granddaughter in his family home in the Lower 9th Ward. Before Hurricane Katrina, they evacuated to a hotel in Houston. After the flooding, they met people at a church-sponsored clothing drive, who helped them find and furnish an apartment. As a gasoline truck driver, Steven reported he transferred his licenses and

certifications to work in Texas and within a few weeks he had a full-time job. In 2007, he visited for Mardi Gras and applied to a local trucking company that had reopened. They hired him the next day, which enabled him to stay permanently. He intended to fix his grandfather's house but ran into family issues, including legal battles over and theft of insurance money. In September 2011, he rented his uncle's house, where he lived with his elderly mother. In 2016, he reported the only major change was that his teenage granddaughter had moved in with him because she missed New Orleans. He also stated the family home had collapsed, and the legal battle continued. He still planned to rebuild once the judge ruled he and his mother had 100% ownership of the house. I met him through his best friend, whose house I gutted in June of 2006.

Thomas Stevens. When Hurricane Katrina hit, Thomas Stevens, a working class 20-year-old sophomore at Tulane University, shared an apartment in the Carrollton area with his father, who worked as a bellman at the Ritz-Carlton. He went to school for free because his mother worked for Tulane University Hospital. When Thomas evacuated to his girlfriend's parent's house in Houston, his father chose to go to work, thinking the hotel would offer him a room as they had in the past, but this did not happen. and Thomas supported him financially until his death in 2009. In January 2006, Thomas returned when classes resumed and lived on campus. However, he did not know his mom lost her job, meaning he lost his tuition waiver. Tulane University kicked him out in May 2006 for nonpayment. After he lost campus housing, he struggled with homelessness and eventually moved into a FEMA trailer with his mother and his girlfriend. He also struggled to financially support his father, who became severely depressed after being trapped in the floodwaters and never returned to work before he died in 2009. Thomas turned to alcohol to alleviate the pressure and was arrested several times for public intoxication and other related charges.

In August 2011, Thomas lived alone in Metairie with plans to return to New Orleans eventually. He operated his own tax company and planned to graduate from Southern University at New Orleans in May of 2012. A few months after the 2011 interview, he moved in with his mother, where he continued to be until 2016. At the time of the 2016 interview, he stated he was transitioning into his grandfather's house in Slidell, which needed repairs because it had been vacant since his grandfather's death in 2012. Thomas reported he had graduated from college but could not find a job in his field because he received a felony conviction although he was the victim of a check cashing scam. He also stated a doctor diagnosed him as bi-polar, but he could not afford the medicine. Drinking continued to be a problem that had alienated him from his friends and social network and that led to arrests, which interfered with maintaining low-wage service jobs. I met him through Joseph Johnson in case 2.

Paulette Watson. At the time of Hurricane Katrina, Paulette, a 57-year-old single mother of five, worked for the Sewer and Water Board and owned a house in Algiers, where she lived with her 16-year-old son and her elderly mother. They evacuated to a Mississippi shelter before the storm but met a woman outside the shelter looking to house a family. After staying with her for a week, Paulette relocated to Houston because she had friends there. She returned in January 2007 to save her retirement benefits. In 2011, she was the only member of her family living in New Orleans because her mother died shortly after they returned and her adult children did not return. Her youngest returned for a short while before moving to his brother's house in California because he could not find a job in post-Katrina New Orleans. In 2016, Paulette had retired with 100% of her benefits. She paid off her house and her car and found a part-time retail job to keep her active. She stated she was also working on losing weight and improving her physical health, which suffered when she turned to food to deal with the stress and depression of displacement. I

met her through her grandson, who worked with a colleague's husband on the New Orleans Fire Department.

Josephine Davis, a working class 14-year-old, started high school a few days before the disaster. With her mom and one of her sisters, she evacuated to rural Mississippi and stayed at her grandmother's house, which lost electricity and running water in the storm. Her dad, Raymond Davis in case 3, picked her up and took her to Atlanta to where he evacuated before the storm. When her dad returned to New Orleans in October 2005 for work, she went to Houston to live with her sister. Eventually, she moved in with her aunt, now living in Katy, Texas, a western suburban of Houston. At the end of the 2006-2007 school year, she moved to her mother's new place in Slidell. She graduated from Slidell in May 2009. In January 2012, she lived in her own apartment in Slidell with her 2-month-old daughter. In 2016, she reported she lived in Metairie with her daughter, her fiancé, and their 6-month old son. I met her through her aunt, Barbara Davis in case 2.

Case 2 Descriptions: Participants that Stayed Displaced in Houston

Lisa Wilson. Before the interview, Lisa Wilson introduced me to her family by showing me photo albums. She is the daughter of a teenage mother who worked three jobs to provide for her. She is married to a private practice lawyer; both were born and raised in New Orleans. At the time of Hurricane Katrina, they owned their home, had a 4-year-old son, and expected their daughter, whom they wrongly believed had Down syndrome, to be born in November. They evacuated to Houston before the storm and over time accepted relocation as permanent because of the slow pace of recovery. In 2011, they owned their house in Houston, and she was a stay-at-home mother. In 2016, they continued to be in the same house, but she had to return to work to make ends meet. Her mother also lived with them, which put stress on her marriage. Lisa stated

her mother's health was deteriorating due to depression from displacement and several deaths in the family. This forced Lisa to into her mother's role in her family network, a role she still struggled to accept. I met her through Joseph Johnson.

Joseph Johnson is a single, middle class man. In his late twenties in 2005, he rented an apartment with his sister on the Westbank. He left his car and evacuated with a friend to a hotel in Houston before the storm. He tried to return in October 2005, but housing conditions, lack of family, and the overall state of recovery deterred him. In 2011, he planned to return when he had enough money to create positive change for African Americans in New Orleans. I met him through a colleague that conducted research with his father, a social justice advocate in New Orleans. Joseph could not be contacted in 2016 and did not participate in a follow-up interview.

Barbara Davis was a married, 37-year-old, working-class mother of two teenage daughters at the time of the storm. Headed to Baton Rouge, contraflow sent her and her husband to Mississippi while her daughters, riding in a more reliable friend's car, reached the state capital. They were separated for a week before she learned that her brother drove to Baton Rouge, found her children, and took them to his house in Katy, Texas. She relocated to Katy at the insistence of her husband and chose to stay because of the school system. After Hurricane Katrina, she became a Jehovah's Witness, and her marriage ended. A changed sense of morality and dissatisfaction with the state of recovery helped her accept permanent relocation. In 2016, she reported she no longer had family members living with her. She also stated she had moved to Houston and shared a house with a friend and her friend's daughters. She still continued to work at the call center that hired her in 2007. Barbara also reported she struggled with depression since her father's death in 2013. I met her via her brother, Raymond Davis, a participant in case 3.

Regina Walker. At the time of the disaster, Regina, a working-class 13-year-old, lived in New Orleans East with her mother, brother, and grandfather. They evacuated to Baton Rouge before the storm and moved to Orlando a month later. Their family moved several times while her mother searched for stable employment and housing. Each move meant a new school, which created anxiety issues for Regina and a Florida teacher recommended she be home schooled. This enabled her to move in with her aunt, Barbara Davis, in 2007 when her mother chose to send the kids to Katy for the summer to save money. As Regina became established in Texas, she chose to stay permanently. In 2012, she reported her mother continued to ask her to move back to Fort Lauderdale, Florida. In 2016, she stated she had been married for three years and had worked at the call center with her aunt for almost 4 years. She lived alone with her husband in a Houston apartment and planned to have children eventually. I met her via her aunt, Barbara Davis.

Ella Taylor, a working-class, single mother, was 25 at the time of Hurricane Katrina. She lived in the St. Bernard Public Housing Development and was expecting her third child on Valentine's Day in 2006. She evacuated to Mississippi before the storm at the insistence of her grandmother. After she was notified that her complex would not reopen, she left her family and relocated to Houston for disaster housing assistance. She expressed a deep desire to return to New Orleans, but high rents, poor school standards, and the slow pace of recovery persuaded her to stay in Houston until her children graduate. In 2016, she reported the last few years had been hard. Her oldest daughter began acting out and was diagnosed as bi-polar. She had lost her public housing voucher because her caseworker claimed she did not return her annual verification, which Ella insisted she submitted. I met her via her aunt, who worked for the maintenance

department the University of New Orleans before the University privatized maintenance services.

Dwayne Edwards, a working-class 35-year-old father, and his brother evacuated via government means to Atlanta, where they stayed in a church shelter. After a few days, the church sent Dwayne, his brother, and other displaced residents to Houston on a Greyhound bus to apply for disaster housing assistance. In Houston, they reunited with the rest of their family. After seeing the economic opportunity and finding a construction job in Houston, he chose to stay, which separated him from his family, including his son and step-daughter, who all returned to New Orleans. In 2016, he continued to live in the same apartment he first moved into in 2005. He reported he had a new job as doiler maker at a chemical plant in Houston, where he had doubled his salary. He stated he would always be displaced but shared his love for second lines and New Orleans culture with those in Houston. Being separated from his family, especially his children, negatively impacts his mental health. I met him via Jason Boissiere.

Jason Boissiere, a working-class 28-year-old musician and barber, sought shelter in the Lafitte Public Housing Development with his cousin during Hurricane Katrina. He sent his estranged wife and two-year-old daughter to her family in Dallas, Texas, but stayed because his car was in the repair shop. After the flooding, he and his friends walked to the Superdome with a grill. They stayed outside and became community chefs until buses transported them to Houston. In Houston, he reunited with his extended family at the Reliant Center. His parents, extended family, and, by then, ex-wife and four year old daughter returned to New Orleans in 2007. As an entrepreneur who had to establish a clientele in Houston to survive displacement, he stayed because he did not want to start over again in a city that was both partially functioning and partially populated. In 2012, he owned his own shop and planned to return in retirement. In 2016,

he continued to own his own shop and live in the same apartment but planned to buy a house soon. He had gotten married and had a son and a daughter. His ex-wife and daughter also relocated to Houston in November 2011 to be closer to him. He stated he continued to play in a brass band in Houston, but his involvement in his Mardi Gras Indian culture suffered because he could not attend events. He indicated he had recently applied for an arts grant to teach two apprentices how to sew and construct the costume and about the culture. He had returned to college for criminal justice and still intended to return when he retired at 50. A colleague sent me a newspaper article that featured his store. I visited his barbershop each time I went to Houston to interview participants.

Edith Jones. At the time of the storm, Edith Jones, a working-class 21-year-old single mother, lived with her mother and 2-year-old daughter. Her mother worked for the Astor-Crowne Plaza and received a room for her family to stay in during the storm. On the seventh day, the hotel put everyone out. Edith heard about a bus pick up point on the Westbank and pooled her money with strangers to hire someone to drive them across the Crescent City Connection because they heard Jefferson Parish police had orders to shoot anyone walking on the bridge. Edith and her family waited two weeks to be evacuated from the flooded city. Her family ended up in shelter in Keller, Texas, for a month before receiving housing assistance in Fort Worth. She relocated to Houston in October 2006 to find stable employment. She stated, “*They tried to kill us,*” when explaining why she could not return to New Orleans.

In 2016, Edith reported she and her girlfriend had purchased a house in Fresno, Texas, a few months after the 2011 interview and got married at the end of 2015. She continues to experience discrimination based on her sexual orientation and physical appearance (i.e.: hair and clothing choices) that she does not experience in New Orleans. She also stated she developed

physical health problems due to stress eating that led to hospitalization multiple times over the past five years. In the follow-up interview, she described being wrongfully convicted of food stamp fraud in Houston. Financially unable to fight the charges, she accepted a plea deal when a Houston attorney told her, as an African American resident from New Orleans she could not win. She found the felony theft charge made it even more difficult to find and keep employment in Houston. I met Edith via a colleague who interviewed her for a study on the rate at which low-income women returned to college after Hurricane Katrina.

Cora Williams. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, Cora Williams, a 38-year old homeowner and single mother, lived in Waggaman, LA with her six-year-old daughter. They evacuated to stay with family in Baton Rouge. After a week, she relocated to Houston with her aunts and their families because her aunt's company had rented them two suites for her family. Cora reported she made too much money to qualify for federal disaster assistance. Her house did not flood, but the hospital where she worked, Tulane University Hospital, did. Her daughter wanted to stay in Houston, so she found a job at a medical center and increased her salary by more than \$20,000. She sold her house in Louisiana for a profit because it was not damaged and bought a new house in Sugarland, Texas. She remarried in 2010 and planned to go to doctoral school in 2012. In 2016, she scheduled a follow-up interview but did not answer at the arranged time. Another time could not be arranged, so she did not participate in the second round of interviews.

Case 3 Descriptions: Participants that Relocated to Houston after Returning to New Orleans

Raymond Davis. After holding a 'Run Motherfucker Run' party in his French Quarter nightclub, 42-year-old New Orleans East homeowner, Raymond Davis, flew to Atlanta. In October 2005, his social network provided him with a job tip and he returned to New Orleans to

work as an inspector for FEMA. By the time FEMA laid him off nine months later, he and his business partners had reopened the club. As the city recovered, competition grew, and the club folded. In September of 2010, he relocated to Katy, Texas, and moved in with his sister, Barbara Davis, and other family members. When interviewed in September and November, 2011, he planned to return as soon as the audio-visual industry recovered. In 2016, Raymond reported a month or two after he moved into his own apartment in Houston, his job forced him to relocate. After moving to Atlanta, he began having back problems that interfered with sitting for long periods of time, which forced him to resign. However, he began managing clubs in Atlanta for one of his former New Orleans business partners. He stated he intended to move to Baton Rouge at the end of the summer of 2016. He indicated the audio-visual industry was thriving in Baton Rouge and returning would allow him to be closer to his daughter and grandchildren. He continued to be a renter and had not purchased another house since Hurricane Katrina destroyed his house in New Orleans East. I met Raymond through Dr. Sanyika.

Marcus Booker, a 30-year-old homeowner in Gentilly, worked in marketing and public relations. He evacuated in advance to a relative's house in Houston with his extended family, his girlfriend, and his dog. When her law firm reopened in December 2005, his girlfriend returned to New Orleans. His job relocated him to a branch in Pidgin Forge, Tennessee, but he quit and returned to Houston within a few months to be closer to family. He and his best friend started a social aid and pleasure club for New Orleanians in Houston. He bounced around between Houston and New Orleans as his employment and relationship status changed. In January 2012, he planned to return in February to marry his girlfriend, now fiancé, in May. In 2016, he reported he returned and married as planned, and he had two kids, a son and a daughter. He described watching many of his friends return and relocate within a few years because of the inflated real

estate prices and the violence. He no longer focused much energy on Houston or trying to convince people to return because he understood New Orleans could not offer middle class families the wages, home prices, or safe environments they found elsewhere. He admitted the marketing industry had not returned, but with his wife's income he did not need to work. A month before the follow-up interview, they purchased a corner store for him to run. I met him through Dr. Sanyika. However, Mr. Boissiere also suggested I interview him.

Lemont Cummings. Before the disaster, Lemont Cummings, a 34-year-old project manager, lived in Kenner with his wife, 6-year-old daughter, and 8-month-old son. They evacuated to Houston before the storm. Their condo sustained minor damage, and at his wife's request, they returned in January 2006. After two months, his company laid off him off when they realized the pace of recovery was too slow to be profitable. Unable to find work in New Orleans, the financial strain contributed to his divorce. In 2010, he relocated with his children to Houston because of its economy. When interviewed in September and November, 2011, he worked for himself and had no plans to return to New Orleans because of the way all levels of government handled the response and recovery. By 2016, Lemont and his two children had moved with his mother in Katy, Texas, after experiencing kidney failure due to undiagnosed case of pneumonia. He attended dialysis three times a week for four hours each visit. At accommodate his health needs, he continued to work for himself. He stated dialysis left him tired which interfered with his work as well as with his normal daily routine of cooking and cleaning for his family. He hoped to receive a kidney transplant by the end of 2016, so he could start working full time again. I met him through Raymond Davis.

Content Analysis Data

In addition to interview data, this project uses documents. To perform the content analysis, the researcher collected articles about New Orleans recovery from two different newspapers, the *Times-Picayune* (*TP*) and the *New York Times* (*NYT*), to represent local and national narratives, respectively. Negrine and Eyre (1998, p.47) claim, “Local newspapers ...cover local events in great detail...to help the local reader/citizen make sense of his or her environment.” Cotter (2003, p.416) argues, “Each word [in a local newspaper] is an open invitation to comment and criticism by citizens of varying enthusiasms who watch closely whether the paper strays too far as a player on the civic team.” This suggests the *TP* narrative is crafted to shape the way residents in the New Orleans metro area interpret the pace and progress of recovery without upsetting local politics. Cotter (2003, p. 416) reported, “The news that the [*New York*] *Times* sees fit to print often finds its way into discussions by policy-makers and politicians, meaning that it effectively sets (or follows) national agenda for public discussion, as well as functions as a ‘paper of record’ for society.” Because of its influence on national politics and its history for acknowledging social differences, the researcher selected the *NYT* as a national media narrative that helped individuals outside of the metro area make sense of New Orleans recovery after the disaster.

To sample media articles, the researcher performed a database search and limited the search results by date: from August 29, 2005 - August 1, 2016. Keywords for the search included: New Orleans, Hurricane Katrina, recovery, Road Home, housing, school, education, income, employment, jobs, health, and return. The researcher created a database of potential articles by selecting the first 100 articles from each keyword search when sorted by relevance. The researcher also selected results when sorting by time to ensure the database included articles

published in each year included in the study. Due to differences in search engines, sorting by time happened differently. The *TP* database contained the first 20 articles for each year because the program displayed search results by year. However, it resulted in 1636 different articles in the database, so the researcher redid the relevance search and only selected the first 50 articles. This resulted in a database with 462 articles. NewsBank did not contain *NYT* articles, so the researcher used LexusNexus. The search process changed slightly because LexusNexus did not offer the same search functions as NewsBank. The researcher selected the first 100 articles by relevance and the first 50 articles for the housing and jobs keyword searches sorted by most recently published. This resulted in a database with 587 articles.

The researcher used purposive sampling to select articles for the sample. This included selecting articles: by date, by headline themes, and by series (i.e.: Road Home legal battles formed a series, so the researcher selected the article published last, assuming it would contain similar information from earlier articles on the topic as well as the final court decision).

Although the researcher intended to limit the sample size to 50 articles per paper, the sample contained 115 articles: 59 *TP* articles and 56 *NYT* articles. The additional *NYT* articles allowed the sample to include all six statistical updates on the condition of post-Katrina New Orleans instead of just one. These annual updates tended to be short, so the researcher included them in addition to 49 other articles. The researcher thought removing anymore articles from the *TP* sample would result in holes, so the researcher decided to expand the sample size to 59. This made sense in light of the search results which showed the *TP* published thousands of more articles on Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans recovery than the *NYT*.

Analysis

Before interview data can be analyzed, the researcher must transcribe the audio recordings verbatim (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Seidman, 2006). For qualitative research, verbatim transcription means including pauses, laughs, filler words, and nonverbal cues in the written text (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Seidman, 2006). The author transcribed the original interviews, which Seidman (2006) suggests allows researchers to know their data better. Time constraints led the researcher to use a transcription service to transcribe the 2016 follow-up interviews. Although Seidman (2006) discusses transcribing only pertinent sections in order to decrease the time necessary to transcribe interviews, for this project, the researcher transcribed each interview in its entirety. This ensures the data is not reduced or limited before analysis begins (Seidman, 2006). The news articles moved directly to analysis.

When conducting a content analysis, researchers can analyze the data through a quantitative or qualitative approach (Babbie, 2004). Babbie (2004, p. 318, emphasis in original) suggests that, “Content analysis is essentially a **coding** operation...[a] process of transforming raw data into a standardized form.” A quantitative approach requires coding the data in such a way as to end with numerical values that can be analyzed using statistical processes (2004). Researchers have options for reducing data to numbers, which include counting manifest content, “the concrete terms contained in a communication” or assigning numbers to codes describing latent content, “the underlying meaning of communications” (Babbie, 2004, p. 319). Babbie (2004) also emphasizes the necessity of including base line measures. For example, in addition to reporting the number of articles that cited housing as an obstacle to return, to create a comparison the researcher would need to report the number of articles that did not mention housing as an obstacle as well as the number of articles that portrayed housing as a means to

return and those which focused on different obstacles. This project used a qualitative approach to conduct a content analysis of news articles, which will be coded and analyzed in the same manner as the interview transcripts.

To analyze qualitative research, the data is broken into statements and grouped around similar ideas, which are called codes (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2003; 2007). This process, known as coding, involves, "...identifying and reordering data, allowing the data to be thought about in new and different ways" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 29). Coffey and Atkinson (1996) describe coding as simplifying and reducing as well as complicating data. It reduces data into manageable segments and categorizes it according to relevant concepts (1996). The codes become conceptual labels that link passages addressing similar topics from different data sources (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Creswell, 2007). However, Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p. 29) contend that, "Coding need not be viewed simply as reducing data to some general, common denominators. Rather, it can be used to expand, transform, and reconceptualize data, opening up more diverse analytic possibilities."

Creswell (2007) encourages researchers to use multiple rounds of coding and pull code names from multiple sources. To begin, he suggests scholars limit themselves to five or eight codes that originate from initial scans of the data (2007). Overall, Creswell (2007) recommends limiting the total number of codes to twenty-five or thirty in order to keep future analysis steps manageable. Although researchers may use predetermined or "*a priori*" codes, Creswell (2007, p. 152, emphasis in original) advocates allowing inductive codes to emerge during the coding process. This allows the codes to "reflect the views of the participants in a traditional qualitative way" and does not limit the analysis to only those concepts selected by the analyst before data collection (Creswell, 2007, p. 152). In vivo codes are code labels that are direct quotes from the

data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Creswell, 2007). As codes emerge, it may be necessary to recode the dataset. Subsequent rounds of coding further clarify and organize the data within codes (Creswell, 2007). For this project, deductive codes emerged from the literature review. They included recovery planning, recovery policy, uneven recovery, recovery outcomes, continued vulnerability, barriers to rebuild, barriers to return, assistance, race, class, and gender. The researcher also allowed inductive and in vivo codes to emerge. A full list of codes is in the appendix.

After coding, the researcher analyzed the codes for meaning and combined them to create themes. To analyze the data, this project used a holistic rather than an embedded approach (Creswell, 2007). Embedded approaches selectively analyze specific facets where holistic approaches analyze the case as a whole (2007). For this project an embedded approach would limit analysis to institutional obstacles presented by housing, education, healthcare, and employment policy changes. Instead, the researcher will analyze each case in its entirety, including physical, emotional, and psychological obstacles as well as institutional barriers. This approach allows a deeper understanding of the needs and experiences of displaced African Americans because the participants' framework and identification of barriers will direct the analysis process.

With a holistic approach, this study used two levels of analysis. First, the researcher analyzed the cases separately utilizing a within-case analysis (Creswell, 2007). In this phase, codes are combined to allow themes to emerge (2007). The second level of analysis used a cross-case analysis where the researcher conducted "a thematic analysis across the cases" (Creswell, 2007, p. 75). This analysis compared and contrasted the themes developed in the within-case analysis of each case to see if they apply to multiple cases (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). This

process allows the researcher to form assertions about the meaning of each case as it relates to the central research question and to the other cases (Creswell, 2007).

Validity

Establishing validity is important in all research projects (Creswell, 2003; Babbie, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Denzin et al., 2008; Seidman, 2006; Sirkin, 1999; Field, 2013; Yin, 2009). In quantitative research, validity refers to the degree that a construct measures what it intends to measure (Babbie, 2004; Field, 2013; Sirkin, 1999). This is an important idea because many of the concepts scholars attempt to measure are not easily quantifiable. There must be a logical connection between indicators and the quality to be measured to ensure the accuracy of a study's findings and conclusions (Babbie, 2004; Field, 2013). In qualitative research, validity still refers to the accuracy of the concepts and interpretations; however, validity is verified through alternative means (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2007). To Babbie (2004), qualitative research tends to offer greater validity than quantitative studies that use surveys or experiments because qualitative field research allows the in-depth investigation of the meaning of concepts, which typically is not possible via quantitative surveys. Some scholars suggest using alternative terminology to discuss validity in qualitative research, and others reject the notion of objectivity that validity relies upon (Seidman, 2006). Yin (2009) proposes using data triangulation to ensure validity. Seidman (2006, p. 26) ultimately argues that researchers must strive to understand how their study can benefit from grappling with questions of validity rather than prescribe "mechanistic responses" appropriate for all studies.

This study employs several methods to ensure validity. First, the validity of the findings will be verified by comparing them to previous research in the field (Creswell, 2007). Secondly, the study includes interviews with grassroots organizers, who can act as key informants to verify

the accuracy of the information reported (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2007). Finally, the findings from the content analysis and interviews ought to align with each other, which will provide another source to check the validity of the overall research findings (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). Additionally, the content analysis will focus on latent content, not manifest content, which reduces issues with validity but can increase issues with reliability (Babbie, 2004).

Reliability

Reliability refers to the ability of a study to be replicated and arrive at the same research findings (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2003). Qualitative research tends to have greater issues with reliability than quantitative research because of the interpretive nature of qualitative research (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2007; Seidman, 2006). For example, in a quantitative content analysis, a researcher may count the number of times particular words appear. Because this process does not depend on the subjectivity of the researcher, different researchers can replicate it easily and expect to arrive at similar conclusions (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2007). A qualitative content analysis, relying on the meaning a passage expresses, requires researchers to interpret events similarly in order to reproduce the findings of the study (Babbie, 2004). This is more difficult as researchers bring different ideological lenses and understandings to bear on the data (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2007).

To ensure reliability of this project, the researcher explicitly indicates personal bias concerning the recovery process of New Orleans as well as the individual recovery processes of displaced African Americans. Situating the role of the researcher within the context of the study achieves this goal (Creswell, 2007). In addition, the project follows Babbie's (2004) recommendation to use comparative, not merely descriptive, evaluations to report relevant findings.

Role of the Researcher

I undertake this project as a young, Black mother, aware of the legacy of African American activist scholars. My role in the recovery of New Orleans began in March, 2006, when I participated in the college spring break initiative: Katrina on the Ground (KOTG). The organizers of KOTG designed a comprehensive political education experience for African American college students based the teachings of Ella Baker and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. After volunteering several times, I relocated to New Orleans in September, 2007, to learn grassroots community organizing from the KOTG organizers, who organized the New Orleans Survivor Council (NOSC). I organized residents throughout New Orleans and residents in Renaissance Village and other Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) trailer parks in Baker, LA, to facilitate a community return.

While organizing the New Orleans Survivor Council, thousands of Hurricane Katrina survivors shared their experiences with organizers. The residents described what they went through in the initial wake of the storm and what they continued to experience as a result of Hurricane Katrina. At the first meeting of the New Orleans Survivor Council in January, 2006, over four hundred survivors came together to plan an organized return to the city. They identified four factors necessary for their community to return. These included, “a place to live, a place to send their children to school, a place to go when they got sick, and a job” (People’s Organizing Committee, 2008). It is from these mandates that I explore the impact of Hurricane Katrina through a race, class, and gender sensitive perspective.

Alternative Research Design

Although this project proposes a qualitative approach, alternatives exist. Changing the approach impacts the research question because the different approaches address different types

of questions. Quantitative studies focus on “what” or “how many” rather than “how” or “why”

(Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2007; Field, 2013; Yin, 2009). The quantitative research questions are:

- 1) Is there a statistically significant relationship between race, class, and gender and attitudes on and experiences with post-Katrina housing, employment, education, and healthcare policy changes?
- 2) Can attitudes on and experiences with post-Katrina housing, employment, education, and healthcare policy changes accurately predict if participants returned or not?

To examine these questions, the methods would also change. The project would use a survey questionnaire with closed-ended questions rather than interviews with open-ended questions (Field, 2013; Fowler, Jr., 2009). The survey would collect demographic information, inquire about post-Katrina housing, employment, education, and healthcare experiences, and use Likert scales to measure respondent attitudes on opportunities and challenges in post-Katrina New Orleans and in displacement. Likert scales use “standardized response categories...to determine the relative intensity of different items” (Babbie, 2004, p. G6). The responses would be scored to form a simple index.

As a quantitative survey, the sampling strategy would also change. The study would use a clustered, simple random sample strategy (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2003; Field, 2013; Fowler, Jr., 2009; Sirkin, 1999). The researcher would contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to receive a list of all residents from New Orleans that applied for Hurricane Katrina-related disaster assistance. The list would be organized by race and gender to increase the probability of randomly selecting a representative sample (Fowler, Jr., 2009). The researcher would use a computer program to randomly select one thousand participants from the stratified list to provide a large cushion for nonresponses. With four race, two gender, and three class categories, a sample of 300 to 400 respondents should allow subgroup minimums to be met,

would meet Fowler, Jr.'s (2009) recommendations for a reliable sample size, and match standards within the field.

To analyze the survey data, the researcher would use IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Pearson's chi-square would test for significant correlations between race, class, and gender and attitudes on and experiences with housing, employment, education, and healthcare in post-Katrina New Orleans (Field, 2013; Sirkin, 1999). The researcher would then conduct a series of binary logistic regressions. The regression models would use the attitudes and experiences of participants, as represented by an index score, to predict if respondents returned after Hurricane Katrina. Attitudes and experiences would be analyzed separately as well as together to explore the impact of attitudes and experiences on rates of return.

In order to generalize the findings to the larger population of New Orleans residents that applied for Hurricane Katrina-related disaster assistance from FEMA, the study must address issues of reliability and validity. Babbie (2004, p. 275) reports, "Survey research is generally weak on validity and strong on reliability." Using standardized, self-administered surveys increases reliability, or the likelihood that the study would reproduce the same results if repeated (2004). To ensure validity, the survey would be vetted with a few evacuees of different races, classes, and genders to determine problems (Fowler, Jr., 2009). Using Likert scales ensures clarity and consistency in question format to reduce confusion (2009). The researcher would conduct a principle component factor analysis to test the validity of the survey questionnaire (Field, 2013). Additionally, the study would use multiple questions in different formats to investigate respondent attitudes and experiences. Fowler, Jr. (2009, p. 111) suggests, "Multiple questions help even out response idiosyncrasies and improve the validity of the measurement process."

Although this approach addresses many of the weaknesses of qualitative research, survey research comes with its own list of weaknesses (Babbie, 2004; Field, 2013; Fowler, Jr., 2009; Sirkin, 1999). First, while enabling the possibility to sample thousands, surveys can require extensive time and resources to carry out effectively (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2003; Fowler, Jr., 2009). Secondly, the use of standardized processes makes survey research less flexible than other methods (Babbie, 2004). Additionally, nonresponse rates with mail surveys can reduce the ability to generalize the results (Fowler, Jr., 2009). To address this limitation, best practices recommend multiple mailings (Creswell, 2003; Fowler, Jr., 2009).

The next chapters report the findings from the content analysis and the interviews before presenting an analysis and discussion of the findings. The concluding chapter discusses policy implications, limitations of the study, and ideas for future research.

Planning as a Barrier

The content analysis showed the *NYT* and *TP* sampled articles depicted recovery planning as a barrier to return and a hindrance to recovery. Schwab, Topping, Eadie, Deyle, and Smith (1998/2005, p. 47) suggested communities develop plans after disasters, “to provide some vision that serves as a beacon for decision makers and some framework within which decisions will be taken.” Ideally, post-disaster planning is an opportunity to craft a clear community vision for rebuilding that balances short-term needs with long-term goals (Schwab et al., 1998/2005). In contrast, the samples reported the post-Katrina planning process left government officials, residents, and developers confused. Some authors argued uncertainty and perceived risk delayed critical actors (i.e.: residents, developers, federal agencies, etc.) from investing in the future of the city, which stalled recovery. Others blamed federal officials for implementing long-term plans at the expense of short-term housing needs.

The inductive codes that emerged within the recovery planning gross code combined to form three key themes that showed how the samples portrayed recovery planning. The majority of the sampled articles reported problems with the planning process. In their view, processes left out citizen voice and allowed personal interests to influence recovery strategies, which slowed down recovery, led to poor policy decisions, and caused residents to lose faith in official planning efforts described as, “*dysfunctional, tedious and often corrupt horse trading...*” by Rich (2015) in a *NYT* sampled article. A handful of the authors in the sample suggested government officials viewed recovery as an opportunity to fix long-standing social problems (i.e.: school achievement gap, concentrated poverty, racial discrimination). These articles argued improving pre-Katrina quality of life took precedence over helping the displaced return. A few sampled

authors also indicated barriers that compounded the difficulty of creating a recovery plan. These pieces sought to excuse and ease blame for planning failures.

A Flawed Planning Process

The sampled articles presented several issues with the post-Katrina planning process; the issues fell within four categories: limited citizen participation in planning processes, influence of politics on recovery planning, multiple planning processes, and slow results. Although the authors writing for a national audience used different topics to illustrate planning issues, their criticisms of the recovery planning process matched those voiced by authors writing for the local New Orleans metro.

Limited resident participation in recovery planning. Eight *TP* and five *NYT* sampled articles reported issues with citizen participation in the post-disaster planning process. The papers showed government officials made recovery decisions without public input. Two authors from the *TP* used decision-making processes about public school reforms as an example of state leaders making decisions without consulting city residents. Many schools failed to meet state standards for student test scores and graduation rates (T. Perry, 2006). When local officials chose to keep public schools closed for the 2005-2006 academic year and to fire all school personnel, the state legislature placed the majority of Orleans Parish schools under the authority of the state-run Recovery School District (2006). The state granted some schools permission to reopen as charter schools (2006).

“The state Department of Education is poised to take over another 102 public schools in New Orleans as the House gave final approval Tuesday to legislation to strip the Orleans Parish School Board of its authority over all but 13 campuses. ...Many members of the Orleans Parish delegation... complained about making such a drastic change when the people it will affect could not be included in the discussions because they are scattered around the country” (Maggi, 2005).

Reporting the trend of limited participation continued throughout the school unification decision made in 2016: *“Harper Royal especially objected that the bill was developed without extensive public meetings. One source of outrage against the 2005 takeover is that the Legislature acted with limited public input, while people were trying to get their lives back together after Hurricane Katrina”* (Dreilinger, 2016). The authors suggested excluding residents from policy decisions created anger and resentment among residents and city leaders for higher levels of government.

The remaining articles framed limited citizen participation as an issue in the federal decision to demolish public housing developments and rebuild them as mixed-income communities. In the *NYT*, Saulny (2006) reflected resident concerns about the timing of public housing redevelopment, *“‘Right now, we feel it’s not the time to start huge building projects because there are lots of people who are displaced as we speak and need a place to stay,’ said Lynette Bickham, who was evacuated from the St. Bernard project. ‘We’re going to continue to fight for our homes.’”* One sampled *TP* article claimed the way officials framed the public housing debate concealed resident desires that emerged from the third recovery planning process.

“The all-or-nothing tenor of the tear-down debate tends to obscure support for the hybrid plan, one that would save better-constructed buildings in public complexes but allow for changes, such as restoration of the original street grids, and for the incorporation of mixed-income features. Such ideas surfaced often during public meetings called last year to obtain feedback for the Unified New Orleans Plan effort” (Warner, Krupa, & Filosa, 2007).

The *NYT* and *TP* reported that the federal, state, and local government entities did not listen to residents.

“Despite pitched opposition, the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development is going forward with plans to demolish and redevelop the city’s four largest housing projects, knocking

out 3,000 apartments that were occupied by low-income families before the storm and adding middle-income families to the mix. So far, there is money in place to rebuild only about 1,000 units affordable enough for previous residents” (Dewan, 2007).

“While HUD has reopened some complexes, such as Iberville, most remain closed and surrounded by fencing. Eager to return, former residents have marched in protest to force the government to open more, but HUD has refused” (Walsh, 2006).

Walsh (2006) showed that residents devised strategies, such as protests and public demonstrations, to communicate their rebuilding desires to public officials when planning processes did not allow them to participate.

Two *TP* articles contradicted the view that HUD did not incorporate resident input into redevelopment plans. Hammer (2008b) described the department’s response to criticism about not following resident demands by quoting HUD spokesperson, D. J. Nordquist,

“Nordquist said HUD has, in fact, consulted extensively with public housing tenant groups. The tenant groups have held numerous meetings with the developers of new complexes and visited other cities to study similar redevelopment projects. And she said HUD has worked vigorously to help the displaced return home” (Hammer, 2008b).

The authors portrayed HUD as limiting resident participation to how new developments should look. Reckdahl (2011) recognized HUD consulted residents but indicated resident inclusion in design discussions did not help former residents return to redeveloped units. Reckdahl (2011) wrote, *“The relatively small number of returnees at Harmony Oaks [previously C. J. Peete or the Magnolia Projects] understates the substantial influence residents have had on the new complex.”* Together the articles in these codes showed that residents demonstrated to communicate their desire to return to the existing units, but HUD only consulted residents after making the decision to redevelop the complexes.

Both samples reported government officials made recovery decisions without consulting the residents. The authors used public housing redevelopment to show federal officials ignored public protests and limited resident input. The *TP* sample also portrayed state officials as changing public education without public participation. The authors showed residents devised strategies to be heard by local, state, and national actors when government officials announced unpopular plans. The papers indicated resident protest did not stop state or federal plans. However, returned residents influenced local plans because local politicians worried about reelection. The next section examines how city politics and multiple planning processes created issues for recovery planning efforts.

City politics & multiple planning processes. In addition to problems caused by state and federal officials making decisions with limited citizen participation, the sampled articles portrayed recovery planning as shaped by city politics and power differences among local interest groups. The authors argued personal interests and political careers shaped city-wide recovery plans. Three *TP* articles and six *NYT* articles in the sample described how politics influenced recovery planning. Three of the six *NYT* articles also discussed the series of planning processes initiated after Hurricane Katrina. The *NYT* authors blamed city politics for causing the city to undergo multiple planning processes, which increased the time to make a recovery plan and slowed down recovery.

Both samples portrayed recovery as contingent on government decisions. An October *TP* article emphasized the importance of government decisions by quoting sociology professor and disaster expert Benigno Aguirre.

“The tendency is to try to explain things on the individual level, to ask whether the evacuee in Arkansas is going to return or not. ...But ...it is a collective dynamic going on: the decision-making of government officials, the use of the land and the type of work you

make available to people. That is a political and a cultural factor. ...I think the impact of government decisions is going to be much greater in New Orleans than it has been in other places hurricanes have hit,' he said. 'That relates to the fact that it is a city below sea level surrounded by water. To what extent will the levees be strengthened? What areas within the city will be rebuilt? Will some areas be dredged out and become wetlands, and others built up so that they are at a higher elevation? What sorts of subsidies might be available for housing? A lot of people did not have flood insurance. They will be hit much harder economically than in most other storms where a lot of the damage is done by wind'" (Moran, 2005).

Moran (2005) concluded, "[T]he climate set by government at all levels in the next few months will be a major factor that influences how many of the displaced will return." In a January *NYT* article, Dao (2006) used a study by Brown University sociology professor John R. Logan to suggest up to eighty percent of African American residents "*might not return for several reasons: their neighborhoods would not be rebuilt, they would be unable to afford the relocation costs, or they would put down roots in other cities.*" Dao (2006) wrote that Logan stated, "*The continuing question about the hurricane is this: Whose city will be rebuilt?*" Both samples used experts to support the view that government decisions would affect return rates by determining recovery priorities and policies. The *NYT* sample emphasized that African Americans were the most vulnerable because their neighborhoods received the most damage.

In a *NYT* one-year anniversary article, Nossiter (2006) suggested elected officials, rather than professional planners, leading recovery planning, hurt the city's recovery.

"A big test will come soon when the Council considers overhauling the day-to-day planning process, taking most decisions out of political hands -- their own -- and putting them under the purview of professional planners. That change was accomplished a century ago in most other places. But the old system has held on in New Orleans, with serious implications for orderly reconstruction of the ruined neighborhoods and equitable preservation of those that are not" (Nossiter, 2006).

Nossiter (2006) also quoted New Orleans City Council Member Stacy Head to illustrate the stress and pressure recovery planning placed on elected officials. “*‘I don’t want this power,’ Ms. Head said. ‘This is horrible. I don’t like that responsibility. I think it should lie with the planners’*” (Nossiter, 2006). In a *NYT* four year anniversary article, the author portrayed New Orleans public officials as a barrier to effective recovery planning. Robertson (2009a) wrote, “*The city’s political leadership remains torn by factionalism, and few people look to it for visionary or inspirational ideas.*” Robertson (2009a) presented an example of how political factionalism impeded recovery by blocking economic development projects.

“Plans for a public-private partnership for economic development were suspended this month by Mayor C. Ray Nagin, who cited a lack of diversity in the venture’s proposed membership, among other reasons. His opponents, including Arnold Fielkow, the president of the City Council, said the move was retaliation for the Council’s rejection of the mayor’s plan to move City Hall to the vacant Chevron building downtown” (Robertson, 2009a).

The *NYT* sample portrayed depending on city leadership as an error. Nossiter (2006) framed the city council as less qualified than professional planners to lead recovery planning. In Robertson’s (2009a) depiction, city leaders made community development decisions based on personal interests rather than the city’s needs.

Two *TP* sampled articles and one *NYT* sampled article used re-election concerns to illustrate how city politics influenced recovery planning decisions. In April in the *TP*, Walsh (2006) quoted HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson, who explained some federal planning decisions would not be made until after the mayoral runoff election on May 20, 2006.

“...Jackson said that complexes that suffered severe damage will likely be torn down and redeveloped. Although, he said, it will be up to the mayor -- either incumbent Ray Nagin or Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu, depending on who wins the May 20 runoff -- to make the key decisions on rebuilding. ‘We will rebuild, if that’s what the

mayor wants,’ Jackson said. ‘Do we rebuild the same way? Probably not’” (Walsh, 2006).

In early August, Russell (2006) used expert opinions to argue that even after the election city government continued to avoid making decisions, which led to a slower rate of return between April and June 2006 than the first three months of the year. Russell (2006) reported in the *TP* that Professor Logan from Brown University:

“...blamed the [slow rate of return] in part on a lack of leadership and confusion about the city’s future among the displaced. ‘This is a time when public officials have to make the hard decisions about where and how to invest, and enough time has passed since the local elections that one could expect more decisive action by now,’ [Logan] said.”

Walsh (2006) and Russell (2006) presented examples of the federal and local government waiting to make recovery decisions. Although Walsh (2006) framed the delay as respecting local elections, Russell (2006) suggested officials continued to stall essential recovery decisions after the elections.

In the days leading up to the ten year anniversary, the *NYT* published an article that showed how re-election politics nullified the first planning process. Rivlin (2015) interviewed Alden J. McDonald Jr., president and chief executive officer of Liberty Bank and Trust Company and chairman of the New Orleans Chamber of Commerce, who served on Mayor Nagin’s Bring New Orleans Back Commission (BNOB).

“McDonald was also frustrated by the response to a 17-member panel he sat on created by Mayor Ray Nagin shortly after Katrina to develop a plan for rebuilding the city. ...[A]nother member of the panel recommended that the city temporarily ban rebuilding in its lowest-lying parts while officials made up their minds about whether to reinvest in neighborhoods that were in harm’s way. This idea infuriated those eager to start work on their homes. Nagin, with an election only a few months off, did not want to step into this controversy and simply thanked his commission for its

hard work and then ignored its suggestions, as if every proposal were tainted by the proposed temporary ban.” (Rivlin, 2015).

Rivlin (2015) used McDonald's experiences to frame Nagin's dismissal of all BNOB ideas as a decision to further his personal political career. The article reported the recovery planning process started over after Nagin rejected all BNOB proposals.

The sampled *NYT* authors suggested starting over lengthened the overall recovery planning period, which impacted the decisions of state officials and residents.

“The latest notion, after earlier false or incomplete starts, is to turn planning over to the citizens, allowing neighborhoods to choose from a list of planners, with the hope that at the end it can all be folded into one giant framework. It was pushed by state officials holding the redevelopment purse strings who grew impatient this summer with the city's abortive planning efforts” (Nossiter, 2006).

As Nossiter (2006) indicated, the Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP) planning process began almost one year after the disaster. This is significant because one *NYT* article in the sample suggested, *“the six-month point [was] a moment when many must decide whether to establish a life in a new place or return home”* (Dewan, Connelly, & Lehren, 2006). Nossiter (2006) suggested repetitive planning processes that failed to produce action discouraged residents.

“Like others, Ms. Hazlett professes bewilderment at a planning process, now stretching out for nearly a year, that involves an ever-shifting cast of characters, embraces and then swiftly rejects differing visions, and calls for repeated consultations with the citizens – and still produces no plan” (Nossiter, 2006).

Nossiter (2006) described displaced residents as uncertain about recovery as a result of the planning process.

The sampled articles showed city politics influenced recovery in several ways. Both samples used expert opinions to argue government decisions would shape recovery and determine return rates. Authors presented examples of federal officials delaying recovery

planning decisions until after local elections. The samples portrayed local politicians as susceptible to political pressures. In their view, city leaders placed their personal aspirations before the city's needs and avoided making recovery decisions that could hurt their careers. Citing Nagin's rejection of all BNOB proposals, Rivlin (2015) suggested re-election pressures caused the recovery planning process to start over and delayed the adoption of a recovery plan. The slow pace of recovery planning discouraged residents and became a barrier to recovery.

Too slow to produce a recovery plan. The articles discussed above suggested local leaders hurt recovery planning efforts by prioritizing their careers when faced with controversial proposals. They argued initiating multiple planning processes extended the planning period and slowed down recovery. Six sampled *NYT* articles and two sampled *TP* articles described recovery planning as slow and indicated barriers residents, developers, and financial institutions faced as a result.

According to both samples, without a recovery plan to restore public institutions, returning to post-Katrina New Orleans became challenging for residents. A *TP* sampled article stated, “*Orleans Parish public schools, where more than 90 percent of students before Katrina were Black, have no plans to reopen any east bank campuses before the summer of 2006, leaving parents to look elsewhere for places to educate their children*” (Moran, 2005). Another sampled *TP* article stated, “*Eight months after Hurricane Katrina, the future of the 10 public housing complexes in New Orleans remains an open question*” (Walsh, 2006). These articles emphasized how long the city waited to make plans to rebuild public institutions that served primarily Black or low-income residents.

The *NYT* sample claimed the slow planning process created uncertainty, which operated as a barrier to return. Nossiter, Rivlin, Schwartz, Lipton, and Steinhauer (2005) showed how uncertainty made residents and businesses hesitant to rebuild:

“Every major decision seems to rely on another decision that has to be made first, and no one has stepped in to announce what the city will do and break the cycle of uncertainty. Many residents and business owners will not return and invest without an assurance of flood protection, for example.”

They also documented the impact of the slow planning process on resident decisions, *“While the politics become untangled, the futures of thousands of people hang in a terrible balance. ‘We need to know what the city is going to do,’ said Oliver Thomas, the president of the New Orleans City Council, ‘so we can start planning our lives’”* (Nossiter et al., 2005). Nossiter et al. (2005) suggested resident plans depended on city plans, and recovery stalled because residents and business owners waited for the city's plan before deciding to return. Four months later, Dewan et al. (2006) interviewed displaced residents about their lives seven months after Hurricane Katrina. They reported, *“Many [displaced residents] expressed frustration about what they perceived as a lack of clear instructions about where or whether they could rebuild. ‘We’re kind of left in limbo,’ Mr. Rodrigue said. ‘So we can’t move forward and we can’t move back’”* (Dewan et al., 2006). Dewan et al. (2006) found without a city recovery plan in place, residents expressed the inability to form their own, which agreed with Nossiter et al.’s (2005) view.

Five months later, Saulny and Rivlin (2006) echoed concern over the lack of recovery plans.

“With no concrete plan in place to help landlords, a large part of the rental stock has been festering for a year now, preventing residents from returning and depleting the work force. ... A lack of information even 12 months after the hurricane has caused confusion and frustration. ‘There is no real identifiable plan that anyone can point to that would enable people to say, ‘I can rely on

this,” said Jerome Anderson, an assistant dean at Tulane Law School who owns five units around the city. The storm destroyed Mr. Anderson’s home and all his rental properties, putting tremendous financial pressure on his resources to rebuild. His situation is typical among local landlords” (Saulny & Rivlin, 2006).

Saulny and Rivlin (2006) connected the lack of a plan to its impact on recovery and the economy as workers without a place to stay had no choice but to remain displaced. They showed the failure of the city to produce a recovery plan frustrated residents and delayed housing repairs, which further hurt the economy by restricting the workforce.

The *NYT* sample also suggested recovery planning delayed private market actors from investing in the city. Nossiter (2006) reported the lack of a recovery plan continued to stall private investment a year after the disaster.

“The outside world is scared by New Orleans. Banks, for instance, are insisting on unusually high collateral in real estate deals, and for good reason, given... no guarantee that neighborhoods will return to life. ...With little direction from the top, long-term planning for the city’s future remains incoherent. A year after the storm, there are no plans for large-scale infrastructure and redevelopment in the city. ...The absence of a plan has forced developers, who might otherwise be building housing for the displaced, to the sidelines. ‘The developers, they want to know what the plan is,’ said Andy Kopplin, executive director of the Louisiana Recovery Authority” (Nossiter, 2006).

Nossiter (2006) quoted Kopplin to show that financial institutions and developers viewed investing in New Orleans real estate as risky because the city did not have a recovery plan in place. The article stated the risk from the uncertainty increased the cost of lending, and therefore the cost of rebuilding, by requiring more collateral. Nossiter (2006) concluded, *“The longer the city is without a master plan, the shakier the fate of the ruined neighborhoods, some planners say.”* Three years later, Robertson (2009a) suggested the hesitancy of the private market to invest in New Orleans remained although for a different reason.

“But perhaps the largest barrier to major private investment is the uncertainty that hangs over every facet of life in the city: the future of the New Orleans economy depends on what happens when the waters rise again. The Army Corps of Engineers has a Hurricane and Storm Risk Reduction System scheduled to be ready in 2011”
(Robertson, 2009a).

Together Nossiter (2006) and Robertson (2009a) showed the uncertainty caused by the slow pace of recovery planning remained over time and prevented the private market from taking an active role in rebuilding New Orleans immediately after the storm. Nossiter (2006) also indicated that projects took a long time to complete after officials announced plans.

The sampled articles claimed the pace of recovery planning became a barrier to return. The *TP* sampled articles highlighted the length of time it took for officials to create plans to rebuild public schools and public housing. The *NYT* sampled articles portrayed resident plans as dependent on city plans. The authors described investment in post-Katrina as risky due to the uncertainty that existed without a recovery plan. The view suggested residents, businesses, and banks hesitated to rebuild and stalled the city's recovery because the planning process took too long to create a recovery plan.

The *TP* and *NYT* samples described several flaws in the planning processes enacted after Hurricane Katrina. The samples found state and federal officials limited residents from meaningful participation in recovery decisions and local officials shied away from controversy while prioritizing personal career aspirations over recovery needs. The samples also claimed the slow pace of planning stalled recovery because the lack of a plan increased the perceived risk of investment. The sampled authors indicated uncertainty hurt recovery in two ways: banks inflated the cost of lending on New Orleans real estate and residents and businesses waited to return and rebuild until the city announced a plan. The samples also portrayed recovery planning as a barrier to recovery by the goals officials and planners set.

Recovery Goals: An Opportunity for ~~Return~~ Change

The sampled articles showed that recovery became an opportunity to improve social conditions in New Orleans. Over time, some authors noted experimenting with solutions for urban poverty overshadowed creating plans with the goal of helping displaced residents return. Eleven articles in the *TP* sample and nine articles in the *NYT* sample discussed the goals that guided post-Katrina recovery planning. Three codes emerged from the quotes about recovery goals: improving pre-Katrina quality of life, creating models to address urban poverty nationally, and no plan for return. The *NYT* sample limited quality of life concerns to public housing, healthcare, levee protection, public education, and economic opportunity. In the *TP* sample, improving quality of life also required repairing basic infrastructure (i.e.: streetlights, potholes), removing environmental contamination, and lowering crime. It included repairing social support systems as well, which highlighted the importance of community at the local level.

Two *TP* articles and four *NYT* articles in the sample described the goal of recovery as improving New Orleans quality of life. In the *NYT*, Robertson (2009a) wrote, “...[R]everting to the city that existed here before the flood is not the goal. ...[T]here was much about pre-Katrina New Orleans, from the unstable floodwalls to the stagnant economy, that was best left behind.” Robertson (2009a) used pre-storm conditions to justify post-storm changes. Maggi (2005) reported that the Louisiana governor viewed social reform as necessary to attract residents to return: “‘Families won’t come back without good public schools,’ [Governor] Blanco said... ‘The state will redesign the schools as an overdue gift to our children.’” In the samples’ perspective, officials viewed public housing and schools as deterrents to return and assumed residents had to be lured back.

Two articles in the *TP* emphasized the opportunity for public housing reform created by displacement. Before HUD announced its redevelopment plans, Walsh (2006) reported on comments from a lawyer with New Orleans Legal Assistance. “*I think they are getting ready to demolish public housing,’ said Laura Tuggle... ‘One of the hardest parts of redevelopment is having to relocate residents of public housing. That job was done for them.’*” With residents already displaced, the federal goal to redevelop public housing into mixed income communities became easier. Warner et al. (2007) stated, “*[The demolition] plan was in place long before the killer storm... HUD officials saw in Katrina’s wreckage and population displacement an opportunity to accelerate plans to revamp complexes...*” These authors portrayed federal officials as capitalizing on displacement and recovery to implement long-term redevelopment plans.

Three articles in the sample framed recovery as an opportunity to develop models to address national issues. In a *NYT* article, Ouroussoff (2011) wrote, “*...the [Iberville redevelopment] project is a comprehensive effort to link housing to jobs and transportation. In doing so, it could begin to undo a pattern of racial discrimination that extends back decades.*” Ouroussoff (2011) suggested recovery plans could test “*a promising new model for housing the poor in cities across the country.*” This viewpoint stated that recovery could be a chance to experiment with strategies to correct systemic discrimination established during Jim Crow, but it does not prioritize a quick return for displaced residents. In a *TP* op-ed, federal Department of Health and Human Services secretary Sebelius and New Orleans Mayor Landrieu (2010) wrote, “*We believe [the new healthcare delivery] system will serve two goals: Providing better health care for the people of the region and serving as a model for the entire country as we reform our health care systems.*” Similarly in the *NYT*, Robertson (2009a) reported, “*[Young nonprofit workers] envision the city as a national example for innovative schools, smart urban planning*

and a housing stock built to the highest environmental standards.” These articles showed that government officials and relief workers viewed testing new models of public service provision, rather than enabling return, as a primary goal of recovery.

A tenth anniversary *NYT* article suggested the focus on improving the city overshadowed helping displaced residents return. Alden McDonald, Jr., president of Liberty Bank, commented, “*There was never a plan to bring people home. ...There was never a plan of any kind*” (Rivlin, 2015). To Rivlin (2015), improving the city became a barrier to return because federal, state, and local officials focused more on attracting people to New Orleans than on helping former residents return. The sampled articles suggested prioritizing return would have changed the shape of recovery programs. For example, Rivlin (2015) noted a focus on facilitating return would have reoriented recovery plans from compensating homeowners according to pre-storm value to awarding homeowners the cost to replace their homes.

In contrast, a *TP* article challenged the idea that federal officials did not create plans to help residents return.

“The survey ...exposed a weakness in HUD’s relocation efforts. ... [O]f those outside New Orleans who want to return ...the vast majority ...said their return would be delayed by a lack of transportation or by moving expenses. C. Donald Babers, the lone member of the HUD receivership board that runs HANO, said it was disheartening to see the persistence of such perceived barriers when HUD has a contract with U-Haul to pay for travel and moving expenses of returning families. He said HUD needs to do a better job of advertising and explaining the program.” (Hammer, 2008a).

Hammer (2008a) suggested plans to help residents return existed. Although this article emerged as an outlier in this research, it indicated the importance of creating outreach plans to inform the public of disaster assistance programs.

Authors in the sample portrayed those planning recovery set improving the city's social institutions and quality of life as the primary goal of recovery to attract former residents and newcomers. They suggested recovery became a time to implement long-term reform plans and to test new education, housing, and healthcare delivery models. In the *NYT*, Rivlin (2015) claimed improving New Orleans for newcomers took precedence over helping residents return and rebuild their communities. Hammer (2008a) reported federal agencies created programs but failed to inform eligible residents, so many residents continued to think they could not return when help existed. Similar to the authors that found officials' goals set recovery planning astray, other sampled authors identified factors to justify the flaws in the planning process.

Barriers to Recovery Planning: Justifying a Flawed Planning Process

To explain the flaws in the planning process, twelve *TP* and fifteen *NYT* articles highlighted barriers that compounded the difficulty of recovery planning after Hurricane Katrina. Five factors emerged, including: uncertainty around how many residents would return, opposing resident desires over rebuilding, displacement limited resident participation in planning processes, recovery plans depended on federal decisions and funding, and that no action resulted after officials announced plans.

The uncertainty about future demographics presented the first barrier to recovery planning in the view of the sampled articles. Three articles in each sample questioned how many residents would return. The *TP* authors assumed New Orleans would lose population as a result of the disaster. However, they reported uncertainty around just how much the city would shrink.

“Two weeks ago, USA Today conducted a telephone survey showing that 40 percent of evacuees from New Orleans did not intend to return to the city. ...William Frey, a Brookings Institution demographer who has followed New Orleans population trends, thinks that figure is exaggerated. Because the city was home to such a strong culture, with its own culinary and musical traditions

and families that have lived here for generations, he said, all but 20 percent will come back” (Moran, 2005).

“Joachim Singelmann, director of the Louisiana Population Data Center at Louisiana State University ...concurred with [Mayor] Nagin’s estimate that New Orleans would lose about 200,000 residents for the next few years, though he said numbers ultimately hinge on the speed of the rebuilding and whether affordable housing becomes available” (Moran, 2005).

Moran (2005) illustrated the debate that existed among demography experts, who expected the population of New Orleans to drop twenty to forty-five percent. Moran (2005) showed experts arrived at different conclusions based on their assumptions; Frey assumed cultural ties would draw people to return whereas Singelmann focused on recovery policy as the determining factor. A *NYT* article echoed Frey’s assumption that most residents wanted to return based on *“interviews with more than 300 evacuees conducted by The NYT”* (Dewan et al., 2006). *“...[M]ost of those interviewed favor returning to the city, expressing... a fierce yearning for home, as if staying away from New Orleans were like trying to breathe air through gills”* (Dewan et al., 2006). The *NYT* sample portrayed less uncertainty than the *TP* sample and suggested most residents had a strong desire to return and rebuild.

The samples reported that although residents wanted to return and experts expected the city to recover the majority of its pre-storm population demographers did not anticipate *“the rate of return [would] be distributed equally across the demographic spectrum”* (Moran, 2005). A *NYT* article stated:

“...unless New Orleans built housing in flood protected areas for low-income residents, and also provided support for poor people to relocate, chances were good that many low-income Blacks would not return. ‘If they didn’t have enough resources to get out before the storm,’ Mr. Stonecipher said, ‘how can we expect them to have the wherewithal to return?’” (Dao, 2006).

Sampled authors quoted Frey and other experts to support predictions that vulnerable populations, such as low-income, minority, and/or elderly residents, as well as those in the hardest hit areas would have a more difficult time returning.

Moran (2005) stated Frey anticipated eighty percent of the residents would return, but by the one year anniversary another sampled *TP* article reported a change in his opinion. “As of June 30, the data indicated that only thirty-seven percent of the city’s pre-storm residents were back in town... [Frey] said getting that number up to sixty percent over the long haul would be impressive” (Russell, 2006). The samples suggested that uncertainty around population change lingered over time, so that successive planning phases continued to base decisions on poor data. The sampled *TP* authors also portrayed experts as less optimistic about return rates over time.

In the *TP*, Warner (2005) depicted the uncertainty around future population size and demographics presented a barrier to planning:

“...[A]t the Louisiana Recovery and Rebuilding Conference... it was clear that no one knows how many people will return, what neighborhoods they will return to and what collective job prospects they may have. ... Experts and policymakers are restless for answers about how the area’s population may change. For now there are mostly questions: Will Orleans and St. Bernard parishes regain sizable populations? Will New Orleans have an electorate with a strong black majority? Will the area’s modest Hispanic count explode with the influx of new workers? Will higher-income jobs emerge from Katrina’s wreckage? ... Tulane University architecture professor Grover Mouton, another meeting participant, said such forecasts are critical to myriad long-range planning efforts.”

In this view, planning the future of New Orleans depended on who would return and to which neighborhoods. Warner (2005) indicated no one knew. Sampled authors suggested planning for a smaller city impacted the types of plans experts suggested. The articles in the sample showed

residents mobilized to defend their right to return to their neighborhoods after plans to shrink the city emerged.

The samples reported that in addition to uncertainty, recovery planning had to contend with opposing residents demands. Five *NYT* articles and three *TP* articles depicted antagonistic resident desires as impeding planning. The *TP* sample showed residents expressed conflicting views on public housing redevelopment.

“[City Council member, Stacy] Head said most of the e-mail she has received from constituents on the issue favors demolition, and she said that appeals against the HUD plans tend to come from people living far away” (Warner et al., 2007).

Warner et al. (2007) indicated a division existed between returned and displaced residents.

Robertson (2010) wrote in the *NYT*:

“From the first year, the city has had to navigate a natural tension between the rights of the returned and the rights of the displaced. Those who have come back to streets of decaying houses and overgrown lawns want to see their neighborhoods thrive again. Those who have not come back -- and plan to -- often say they need more time and resources to repair their homes.”

Warner et al. (2007) and Robertson (2010) depicted a conflict between returned residents' wants and the needs of displaced residents. The sample portrayed tension between returned and displaced residents as a barrier to planning by suggesting the groups wanted city officials to enact opposing plans.

Four *NYT* sampled articles showed how returned homeowners influenced neighborhood planning processes.

“In some areas, in fact, homeowners are trying to use the recovery process to rid their neighborhoods of long-standing apartment buildings that were damaged during the storm. Building parks in the place of apartments that neighbors said lowered property values is ‘killing two birds with one stone,’ said Joseph St. Martin, an architect hired by homeowner groups in New Orleans East to

work on the community development plan the city has asked every neighborhood to devise” (Saulny & Rivlin, 2006).

Saulny and Rivlin (2006) reported homeowners used the UNOP planning process to improve their property values. Three years later, Robertson (2009b) portrayed the Black middle class as blocking housing opportunities for low-income homeownership in their neighborhood.

“A development of 35 single-family, lease-to-own homes in the Black middle-class neighborhood of New Orleans East was blocked by the New Orleans City Council in August. The arguments against it -- that it would damage property values and quality of life -- were similar to those heard in St. Bernard” (Robertson, 2009b).

Robertson (2009b) described the City Council voting in favor of homeowners who wanted to block affordable housing in their neighborhood. This example suggests the City Council prioritized returned homeowner demands over plans to create affordable housing. In contrast, only one sampled *TP* article framed residents as a issue for creating affordable housing. LaRose (2016) wrote, *“The challenge... now is overcoming the NIMBY obstacle - neighbors who support the concept of housing equity, but ‘not in my backyard.’”*

Four *TP* sampled articles argued displacement limited citizen participation in recovery planning processes. In October, Moran (2005) wrote, *“Also complicating recovery is the breadth of the Katrina diaspora.”* Weber and Peek (2012) documented residents ended up in every state in the country. Six months after the levees failed, Warner (2006) framed the racial pattern in displacement trends as a result of the hurricane when he wrote, *“Black people displaced by the killer storm were more likely than white residents to have found a temporary refuge at great distance from New Orleans.”* Two years later, Alpert (2008) indicated the storm affected classes differently as well.

“...[E]mphasis on the importance of strong local leadership [in neighborhood recovery outcomes] tends to miss one compelling

picture of New Orleans neighborhoods: that a higher percentage of the city's poorest residents tended to be displaced to far-flung communities, making it harder for them to keep in touch with local officials as recovery plans for their old neighborhoods were developed" (Alpert, 2008).

These authors sought to frame racial and class disparities in citizen participation as a consequence of the storm to alleviate blame from local planning officials.

Both samples characterized the federal government as a barrier to planning. Two *TP* and eight *NYT* sampled articles blamed the federal government for recovery planning issues. In February, Filosa (2006a) wrote:

"The New Orleans region cannot restore essential services -- from hospitals to utilities -- on its own and needs direct help from the federal government, according to [the Brookings Institution] a Washington, D. C., think tank that is monitoring the slow pace of recovery since Hurricane Katrina. ... 'We are just stunned by two things: the will of the people and their spirit, and by the lack of federal commitment still needed to address the basics,' ...said Matt Fellowes, a senior research associate at Brookings."

Filosa (2006a) used the study results to indicate the importance of federal funding to fix damaged infrastructure and the federal reluctance to provide the necessary funding. The *NYT* sample also reported that the federal government failed to meet the city's financial needs in several areas, including environmental protection.

"Amid the city's divisions, there is one area of consensus: its levees and floodwalls must once again be able to protect New Orleans from swirling gulf waters before the city can fully recover. To date, however, the Army Corps of Engineers has performed only the most rudimentary of repairs, plugging holes and driving steel pilings to create a quick-and-dirty version of protection against Category 3 hurricanes. That will not be enough to restore confidence in the city's future among traumatized residents. Virtually all city and state officials agree that flood protection must be increased to withstand a Category 5 storm" (Nossiter et al., 2005).

“One ambitious coastal restoration plan called Coast 2050 won support from local officials and scientists, but at \$14 billion over several decades it has not received federal financing. ...In the end, it will be Congress who decides, by its financing of the Army Corps, how high a surge New Orleans will be protected against” (Schwartz, Revkin, & Wald, 2005).

These authors suggested city and state officials did not control recovery decisions that required federal funding. Nossiter (2008a) suggested the federal government impacted recovery in more ways than its commitment, or lack thereof, to fund plans.

“The city official in charge of the recovery effort, Edward J. Blakely, said the public’s frustration was understandable, but he suggested that bureaucratic hurdles had made moving faster impossible. Mr. Blakely said crucial federal money had only recently become available, the process of designing reconstruction projects within the 17 zones was time-consuming, and ethics constraints on free spending were acute, given a local history of corruption” (Nossiter, 2008a).

Nossiter (2008a) used Blakey to frame the slow disbursement of federal recovery funds and bureaucratic oversight to prevent corruption as a barrier to implementing recovery plans quick enough to satisfy residents.

The lack of progress frustrated residents and became another barrier to recovery planning as described in both samples. Three *TP* and two *NYT* articles in the sample reported that no action followed to implement plans after official announcements. Nossiter (2008a) presented an example in the *NYT*:

“In March 2007, city officials finally unveiled their plan to redevelop New Orleans. . . It was billed as the plan to end all plans, with Paris-like streetscape renderings and promises of parks, playgrounds and ‘cranes on the skyline’ within months. But a year after a celebratory City Hall kickoff, there have been no cranes and no Parisian boulevards. ...There has been nothing to signal a transformation in the sea of blight and abandonment that still defines much of the city. Weary and bewildered residents, forced to bring back the hard-hit city on their own, have searched the plan’s 17 ‘target recovery zones’ for any sign that the city’s

promises should not be consigned to the municipal filing cabinet, along with their predecessors. On their one-year anniversary, the designated 'zones' have hardly budged. '...I haven't seen anything they've done to even initiate anything,' said Ms. [Cynthia] Nolan, a manager in a state motor vehicles office who has painstakingly raised her house here nearly four feet. 'It's too long. A year later, and they still haven't initiated anything they decided to do?'" (Nossiter, 2008a).

Nossiter (2008a) also used the voice of residents and City Council member Stacy Head to show the frustration residents and city officials experienced at the lack of action. Nossiter (2008a) quoted Mid-City resident, Sheila White, to describe how official announcements “*give people hope*” only to end up broken promises that “*fall into the background.*”

The *TP* sampled articles suggested funding had little to do with the lack of progress from recovery plans.

“Prior to Katrina, almost three-quarters of New Orleans renters lived in buildings with four units or fewer. As of mid-June, 4,557 owners of such small buildings applied for money through the state’s small-rental program. But 85 percent had not begun construction as of June, PolicyLink found” (Reckdahl, 2008b).

“[T]housands of affordable apartments approved for financing through federal housing programs have yet to materialize, according to a new Bureau of Governmental Research report” (Reckdahl, 2009a).

Reckdahl (2008b; 2009a) used policy think-tank reports to shift blame from federal funding to those responsible for rebuilding housing: landlords and developers. Reckdahl (2008b; 2009a) suggested the availability of recovery funds did not spur local development because federal programs required projects to have multiple funding sources.

The sampled articles justified recovery-planning issues by indicating the barriers that confronted the people creating the plans. Both samples claimed uncertain future population forecasts and opposing resident desires complicated the planning process. Authors in each

sample also framed the federal government as a barrier to recovery planning because many local and state plans relied on federal funds. These authors portrayed recovery as dependent on federal dollars and described official reluctance to commit federal funding for infrastructure repairs. Four *TP* sampled authors framed racial and class trends in displacement as natural impacts of Hurricane Katrina. In their view, displacement limited the ability of residents to participate in public meetings, which caused the same racial and class trends to manifest in citizen participation or in who could participate in recovery planning.

Summary

Planning emerged as a barrier to recovery in the sampled articles. The inductive codes combined to form three themes. In the first category, authors indicated four flaws in the planning process: limited citizen participation in planning decisions, personal interests influenced recovery decisions, leaders created multiple planning processes, and planning took too long to create a plan. In the second category, authors showed government officials assumed residents would not return without social reforms. These articles portrayed recovery as an opportunity to improve quality of life and to test models designed to fix urban problems. However, Rivlin (2015) indicated the emphasis on fixing New Orleans overshadowed helping residents return. The third category contained justifications for the poor planning process, such as: poor data on return estimates, conflicting desires among residents, displacement restricted citizen participation, recovery plans depended on federal funding, and plans did not create action. These authors sought to explain planning failures and shift blame from local leaders.

The sampled articles claimed issues in the recovery planning process led to poor decisions and manifested issues in recovery programs. The samples suggested recovery policies contained design and implementation issues that perpetuated systemic discrimination. The next

chapter explores policy issues to show how the samples framed recovery policy as compounding the vulnerability of residents.

Recovery Policy Compounds Vulnerability

In the samples' view, planning officials used recovery to implement changes to improve individual and neighborhood outcomes. The sampled articles evaluated the success of these measures. Both positive and negative outcomes emerged as inductive codes from the recovery outcome deductive gross code in each sample. A positive narrative emerged that portrayed recovery as a successful experiment; however both samples focused more attention on negative outcomes as seen in Figure 1 below. Through emphasizing negative outcomes and factors that restricted return, the samples portrayed post-Katrina recovery policies as decreasing resident abilities to respond to normal emergencies and future disasters.

Figure 1: Number of Recovery Outcome Quotes by Inductive Code per Sample

	Total Quotes	Positive Outcomes		Negative Outcomes		Neutral Outcomes		Pull to Stay Displaced		Determinants
	#	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Times Picayune Sample	242	63	26.0	170	70.2	4	1.7	5	2.1	56
<i>NYT</i> Sample	264	76	28.8	181	68.6	5	1.9	2	0.8	98

In addition to being a deductive gross code, recovery policy emerged as an inductive code inside the continued vulnerability deductive code. Twenty-three *TP* and twenty-seven *NYT* sampled articles framed recovery policy as compounding vulnerability through decreasing daily stability and increasing susceptibility to future emergencies. The sampled articles portrayed recovery policy as increasing vulnerability by creating gaps in assistance that perpetuated racial discrimination and poverty and by failing to improve pre-storm conditions. Affordable housing, environmental concerns, healthcare, and displacement emerged as inductive codes that represented factors the samples identified as compounding vulnerability.

The continued vulnerability gross code also contained quotes that described the populations recovery policy made more vulnerable. Seventeen *TP* articles and fourteen *NYT* articles viewed recovery policy as increasing the vulnerability of vulnerable populations after Hurricane Katrina. Both samples framed recovery policy as compounding vulnerability through its design and implementation. The sampled articles claimed policy issues manifested gaps in assistance that compounded the vulnerability of vulnerable populations (i.e.: African Americans, poor, elderly, etc.) as well as middle and upper class residents, who lost access to basic services, such as healthcare. The sampled authors also provided examples of policies that impacted races and classes differently and described how the struggle to return affected mental health.

Vulnerable Ever After: The Sampled Media's Portrayal of Vulnerability

According to the sampled articles, recovery policies enacted after Hurricane Katrina exacerbated the vulnerability of certain populations. Both samples portrayed African-Americans, disadvantaged children, renters, working-class residents, minimum-wage families, public housing residents, the displaced, the poor, the elderly, the homeless, the mentally ill, the disabled, and/or those with medical needs as vulnerable populations. The sampled authors provided examples that showed these households encountered limited access to housing, schools, and healthcare after the disaster because recovery policy created gaps in recovery. The samples claimed these gaps restricted the ability of vulnerable households to return.

Two articles in each sample suggested populations not traditionally viewed as vulnerable became vulnerable after the storm. They suggested different reasons for the increase in vulnerability. Based on a Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation report, Moran (2007) wrote in the *TP*:

“While barriers to health care tend to be higher among poor, uninsured and minority populations, the report argues that health

has declined among people of all income levels who are experiencing high stress levels and have in some cases lost their doctors and medical records. ... Diane Rowland [said,] ‘While the poor and uninsured had some of the most devastation in terms of their access to care, there was a leveling effect across the city.’”

Moran (2007) quoted Rowland, executive director of the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, to show the lack of hospital facilities increased the vulnerability of middle and upper class residents because the city offered limited healthcare options at a time of increased need. In a sampled *NYT* article, Zernike (2016) framed public education employment decisions as making some middle class residents more vulnerable: “*About 7,500 teachers were fired -- most of them Black -- damaging the city’s Black middle class, economically and politically.*” In contrast to Moran (2007), who depicted increased vulnerability as a consequence of the disaster, Zernike (2016) attributed the increase to a policy decision that gave a large section of the Black middle class incentive to accept jobs elsewhere and to stay displaced long-term.

The articles in the *TP* and the *NYT* samples indicated several recovery policies that decreased the stability of vulnerable households and made it harder for their families to respond to and recover from Hurricane Katrina and the levee failure. The rest of this chapter explores examples from the media samples that showed how design and implementation problems in housing, education, and healthcare policy affected the ability of residents to return. The samples argued housing policies prioritized homeowners, gave disproportional assistance to white communities, isolated renters, and increased living expenses for public housing residents. The sampled authors depicted education reform as perpetuating racial inequality by allowing the highest performing charter schools to use selective enrollment policies that privilege middle class families and white neighborhoods. The sampled articles used healthcare recovery to suggest the slow pace of recovery left residents more vulnerable for years after the disaster. Together, the

samples showed residents faced multiple challenges to rebuilding their lives in New Orleans, which made them more susceptible to instability and mental health issues.

Housing: A Diverse Set of Issues for a Diverse Set of Residents

Seven *NYT* and ten *TP* sampled articles presented federal recovery housing policy as plagued with design and implementation problems. The sampled authors reported homeowner, rental, and public housing programs incorporated design flaws that made poor and African American residents more vulnerable. The reported design issues forced African American homeowners to rely on personal savings to cover large gaps between grants and rebuilding costs, isolated renters in temporary trailer parks with limited public transit, and increased public housing residents' cost of living. The samples also indicated implementation issues existed within the homeowner and public housing programs. These issues included caseworkers that lost verification paperwork, public housing authorities that denied voucher transfer requests to New Orleans, and social stigmas that caused landlords to reject Section 8 tenants.

Homeowners: “Road to anywhere but home”. The sampled articles showed several design and implementation issues that exacerbated the vulnerability of poor and middle class homeowners, particularly in African American neighborhoods. The samples reported the Road Home – Homeowner Assistance Program contained design flaws, including: a discriminatory grant formula, documentation requirements that restricted access to recovery funds, and requiring homeowners to hire, supervise, and compensate contractors on their own. Some sampled articles suggested recovery leaders designed the Road Home program to prevent fraud because they viewed prospective recipients as children or as criminals. The authors in the sample also indicated implementation issues, such as caseworkers losing verification documents and lenders forced loan payoffs before releasing funds for rebuilding. The samples portrayed these

issues as causing homeowners to default on the grant terms, which required rebuilding within three years or repayment of funds. The sampled papers showed officials created exemptions to address the design and implementation issues that caused homeowners to default; however, some sampled authors suggested exemption policies repeated similar design and implementation issues.

To compensate homeowners for damages from the disaster, state officials created the Road Home – Homeowner Assistance Program with federal community development block grants (CDBG) from HUD. The program offered homeowners three options, which impacted the value of their grant; they included: rebuilding a pre-Katrina house for owner-occupancy, selling a pre-Katrina house and purchasing a different house within the state, and selling a pre-Katrina house without buying a new house in Louisiana, which included homeowners that became renters in Louisiana or moved out of state (Road Home Program, 2016). Both samples reported the grant calculation design resulted in shortages and gaps for homeowners in African American communities that opted to rebuild their pre-Katrina residence. In a tenth anniversary *NYT* sampled article, Rivlin (2015) used Liberty Bank president, Alden McDonald, to describe how the Road Home program diminished the capacity of homeowners in African American neighborhoods to rebuild.

“A new federal program called Road Home had just been announced. Publicized as the largest housing-recovery program in the country’s history -- it would eventually grow to more than \$10 billion -- it promised to pay out as much as \$150,000 to homeowners who had flood damage, depending on the size of their losses.

But McDonald had already diagnosed Road Home’s racial bias: Compensation would be based not on the actual cost of rebuilding, but on the appraised value of a property. The cost of restoring a 2,000-square-foot house in mostly white Lakeview, just west of City Park, or Gentilly, a Black middle-class neighborhood to its east, would be the same -- but the Road Home payment would

differ. In Lakeview, that home was valued at a little over \$300,000. A Lakeview couple who received a \$150,000 flood insurance payment would receive the full \$150,000 from Road Home. But in Gentilly, a similar home was valued at closer to \$160,000. If a Gentilly couple received a flood insurance check of \$150,000, they would receive only \$10,000 from Road Home. It wasn't just the poor, McDonald understood early on, who would have trouble rebuilding, but also middle-class people who didn't have the savings or family wealth to make up the shortfall and fix their homes.

'If we use pre-Katrina assessments for compensating people, nobody in the Black community is coming out anywhere near whole,' McDonald said [seven months after Katrina]. By the time a federal judge reached the same conclusion, nearly five years later, it would be largely too late. All but \$148 million of the original \$10 billion had already been spent. (The federal government agreed to set aside another \$500 million specifically to help homeowners shortchanged by Road Home)' (Rivlin, 2015).

Rivlin (2015) showed African American lenders recognized the Road Home grant calculation design perpetuated real estate racial bias years before a federal judge ruled in favor of plaintiffs in preliminary hearings in a federal lawsuit brought against HUD and Paul Rainwater, executive director of the Louisiana Recovery Authority by two civil rights organizations on behalf of African American homeowners. In the lawsuit, the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center, the National Fair Housing Alliance and five African American homeowners claimed African Americans were more likely than white homeowners to receive grants based on pre-storm house value instead of the cost of damages because of historically depressed housing values in minority communities (Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (GNOFHAC), 2008). In the *TP* sample, Reckdahl (2008b) used a PolicyLink study to report, *"In New Orleans, 81 percent of Road Home recipients received awards that did not cover the needed repairs to their homes. The average shortfall was \$54,586."* This statement agrees with Rivlin's (2015) assertion that the Road Home program compounded the vulnerability of poor and middle

class homeowners with low pre-storm house values because they had to rely on personal resources to cover the gap between grant disbursements and the cost to rebuild.

In addition to systemic discrimination grant calculations, the sampled articles reported the Road Home – Homeowner Assistance Program’s documentation requirements restricted the ability of eligible homeowners to receive compensation. In the *TP* sample, McClendon (2015) wrote:

“Unreasonable documentation requirements and systemic discrimination made it impossible for thousands of homeowners to return to the city after Hurricane Katrina destroyed their homes, said leaders with the Road Home Action Network Team and the Lower 9th Ward Homeownership Association. Money isn’t the issue. There is still money in the Road Home budget ... At least \$30 million or so of the \$119 million in unspent Road Home money remains unallocated, said M. A. Sheehan, director of the Homeownership Association’s House the 9 Program. The problem is, she said, HUD’s rules are so strict that many can’t access it.”

McClendon (2015) stressed ten years after the disaster the money to repair homes still existed, but program rules made the funds inaccessible to homeowners in need. A sampled *NYT* article showed Road Home documentation requirements caused problems for homeowners without succession paperwork.

“59-year-old Michael Dupont...could not prove that his family owned the house in which he grew up and in which his mother spent her 49 years of marriage, a house that his great-grandfather bought in the 1920s. ‘We ain’t never been nobody sticking out our hand for government assistance,’ said Mr. Dupont, a former truck driver. ‘But now that we need a little help, they’re slapping us down.’ The Duponts, who were planning to demolish the house and rebuild in its place, received no Road Home money at all because of the title problem. This year, they discovered, to their surprise, that the city had demolished the house. Mr. Dupont, whose mother is living in a nursing home in a nearby city and waiting to return, was sent a \$30,000 bill for the work” (Robertson, 2010).

Robertson (2010) portrayed a disconnection between the city and the federal government that compounded the vulnerability of homeowners who inherited their homes but never filed succession paperwork. The Dupont family could not prove to the federal government that they owned their house; however, the city held them liable for the demolition bill because it recognized the family as the rightful owners.

The sampled *NYT* articles also described allowing homeowners to hire and supervise their own contractors as a mistake that lead to contractor fraud and compliance issues. Buettner and Chen (2014) suggested Hurricane Sandy recovery efforts used different policies based on outcomes from New Orleans recovery. “[*New York City*] would hire and oversee contractors to do the work, instead of writing checks to people to pay contractors themselves -- the model that had been the source of much of the corruption in New Orleans” (Buettner & Chen, 2014). Buettner and Chen (2014) singled out the decision to have homeowners hire private market contractors to make repairs as the factor that enabled the contractor fraud issues that prevented affected homeowners from rebuilding. The samples suggested contractor fraud lead to compliance issues because affected homeowners could not complete repairs and return home within the program’s three-year deadline.

The sampled *TP* articles provided justifications for the design decisions program officials made.

“‘I know it’s complicated, and that it’s going slowly, ‘[Harriet Cortez] said. ‘I was told it was designed the way it was because of all the apparent waste at FEMA. Road Home is under a lot of scrutiny to make sure there isn’t fraud, so there are lots of checks and balances’” (Bruno, 2007).

Bruno (2007) quoted Cortez, a Lakeview homeowner, to depict the slow, complicated process and documentation requirements as fraud prevention in response to FEMA's failures. DeBerry (2011) appeared more critical of government officials and Road Home bureaucracy:

"So many people who didn't have their homes destroyed -- including then-Gov. Kathleen Blanco -- had a condescending attitude toward those who did. Blanco said in a June 2007 phone interview that she was afraid some homeowners would spend their money in the wrong place. No wonder, then, that the program she created treated all applicants as children. A lawyer who was conducting Road Home closings in January 2008 predicted that most recipients would commit fraud. Or crimes. He believed the captain in the New Orleans Police Department who told him that Road Home money would fund a 'crack war' on our streets."

In contrast to Bruno (2007), DeBerry (2011) suggested officials made decisions based on stereotypes. Viewing residents as children and criminals lead to design decisions to prevent fraud although these measures slowed down the grant distribution process as described by Nossiter (2008b) in the *NYT*:

"Because of bureaucratic bungling and the high hurdles that Louisiana imposed on those applying for the money, thousands of homeowners never applied at all, and many other people moved away and abandoned their homes. ...The program's many arcane requirements for receiving the money were conceived with the expectation that the program would be heavily defrauded, the result of the state capital's traditional suspicion of New Orleans. In fact, officials say relatively little fraud has occurred. But nonetheless, at the outset, a complicated application process designed to curb it was developed, including the fingerprinting and photographing of applicants, and punctilious checks of ownership documents that in many cases were hard to come by. A critical study by the RAND Corporation identified 12 major stages in the Road Home application, including paperwork, interviews and detailed correspondence; news reports identified more than 60 steps, major and minor, in all. Each one slowed down the disbursements. By December 2007, half of the people who had applied a year earlier still had not received any money, according to the RAND study. The consequences of the delays for families desperate to return were onerous. ...Some in Gentilly spoke of

elderly residents dying in the long interval between application and grant” (Nossiter, 2008b).

Nossiter (2008b) and DeBerry (2011) indicated negative stereotypes of New Orleans and its residents lead to design decisions that compounded the vulnerability of homeowners by slowing down and complicating the process to receive compensation.

In addition to design issues, the articles in both samples indicated problems implementing the Road Home - Homeowner Assistance Program as well. “*“We’d fax papers; they’d lose them,’ said Virginia Burnett of Gentilly. ‘We’d fax them again.’ It took 18 months to get a grant, Ms. Burnett said, a process she described as a ‘nightmare’” (Nossiter, 2008b).* Burnett’s experience showed how the documentation process became more cumbersome when Road Home workers lost paperwork, requiring documents to be submitted again before moving to the next step of the process (2008b). DeBerry (2011) indicated private lending companies and the federal Small Business Administration created compliance issues:

“Others were forced by their mortgage companies to pay off that mortgage before starting repairs. The Small Business Administration, which initially appeared to be a helpful federal bureaucracy, became yet another hindrance when it forced borrowers to apply their Road Home grants to those government loans” (DeBerry, 2011).

DeBerry (2011) argued when creditors took rebuilding grants, homeowners could not rebuild and violated their Road Home contract, which required homeowners to prove they returned to their residence within three years or to repay the grant.

The sampled articles showed the design and implementation issues led officials to create exemptions for noncompliant homeowners. In the *TP*, McClendon (2014) wrote:

“In July, the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, which funds and oversees Road Home, approved a string of rule changes that provided a series of after-the-fact

exemptions for qualifying participants. Among other things, the new rules provided breaks to grant recipients who:

- *Got ripped off by contractors.*
- *Were forced to pass along insurance awards to mortgage holders.*
- *Used elevation money to repair their homes.*

Jones said all three conditions apply to her case to some extent, but nobody ever told her that might mean she doesn't have to pay back the entire \$30,000 elevation grant. She said she has shown Road Home officials receipts for the work done on her house as well as pictures of the watermarks halfway up the wall from the flood and subsequent repairs to the drywall. Yet, she said, they keep coming after her for money they say she stole" (McClendon, 2014).

Although HUD created exemptions to help homeowners overcome the issues that arose, the samples suggested no one knew about the policy changes. McClendon (2014) turned to City Council Member Cantrell to elaborate on the frustration poor implementation created.

"New Orleans City Councilwoman LaToya Cantrell, who has become an advocate for many in the city struggling with the program, said the problem goes beyond educating the public. The people running the program don't seem to know what's going on either, she said. At a February meeting of the Legislature's Select Hurricane Recovery Committee, Cantrell and others asked Road Home officials to push for a waiver from the federal government that would relax rules for certain Road Home participants. Despite lengthy conversation on the topic, she said, none of the state officials told her or the other meeting participants that many of those rule changes had already been on the books for months.' They don't know what the hell the policies are that they are expected to implement, yet they harass people. They don't even have their own facts straight,' she said" (McClendon, 2014).

McClendon (2014) quoted Cantrell to report that Road Home problems continued to exist seven years after the program began disbursing grants because program administrators, not just workers, did not know about the rule changes and exemptions enacted to improve homeowner compliance. The sampled articles indicated compliance exemptions helped homeowners avoid

penalization for failure to rebuild or for using elevation money to rebuild instead of elevate, but did not bring homeowners come into compliance by helping finish their homes.

The samples showed state and federal officials amended the Homeowner Assistance Program policies as issues arose over time. In addition to the exemptions for noncompliance, officials created supplemental grants for homeowners that faced shortfalls due to the discriminatory grant formula (GNOFHAC, 2011). In the *TP*, McClendon (2015) reported:

“After it became clear that contractor fraud was rife, HUD allowed homeowners to apply for additional money to finish repairs, but the agency created a rule requiring them to provide copies of canceled checks written to pay for the work. Grantees were not told from the beginning they needed to keep copies of the checks, so many never did.”

McClendon (2015) suggested supplemental grant programs recreated documentation issues that restricted the ability of eligible households to access funds to rebuild. The sampled authors claimed supplemental grants and rule exemptions failed to fix problems that resulted from program design and implementation issues because the changes offered too little too late. Critical race theorists would suggest the problems remained because changes did not address underlying attitudes and assumptions informed by negative stereotypes (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Both samples framed the Road Home – Homeowner Assistance Program as compounding the vulnerability of homeowners due to its design and implementation. The sample indicated the grant formula discriminated against African American homeowners, the documentation requirements blocked eligible households from receiving grants, and writing checks to homeowners instead of supervising contractors, which lead to contractor fraud. Other sampled authors reported implementations issues, such as lost paperwork and forced payoffs, decreased the effectiveness of the program by delaying and reducing funds to rebuild,

respectively. The sampled articles claimed the slow, complicated process prioritized fraud minimization over quick disbursement of funds to homeowners. One author in each sample suggested fear of fraud stemmed from stereotypes of New Orleans and its residents as corrupt. The samples showed over time HUD created exemptions and supplemental grant programs to address the problems caused by design flaws, but the *TP* sample found new programs contained design and implementation issues, such as lack of awareness of policy changes among eligible participants, caseworkers, and program administrators and restrictive documentation requirements, that continued to limit the ability of homeowners to rebuild and return. The sampled articles also reported the design of the Road Home – Small Rental Property Program compounded the vulnerability of landlords, who could not rebuild, and renters, who required affordable housing.

Renters: “On your own”. The *TP* and the *NYT* samples described three different programs aimed at assisting renters and creating affordable housing after Hurricane Katrina. These included: the Road Home – Small Rental Property Program (SRPP), FEMA travel trailer parks, and the Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP-Katrina). The first program offered “...a no interest, no payment, forgivable loan” to owners of one- to four-unit rental properties (Road Home Program, 2012). The program “requir[es] property owners to maintain affordable rent levels for a certain fixed term... and, in exchange, gradually forgives the entire amount of the loan,” (Road Home Program, 2012). SRPP reimbursed landlords for rebuilding costs once the landlord proved the units had returned to the market at affordable rates (Road Home Program, 2012). The other two programs gave renters temporary accommodations in travel trailers or private market apartments via housing vouchers. The sampled articles revealed all three programs contained design flaws that compounded the vulnerability of renters and landlords.

The sampled articles indicated several design flaws in the Road Home – Small Rental Property Program intended to replace affordable rental units. Both samples showed state officials prioritized homeowners over renters by allocating most of the CDBG funds to the Homeowner Assistance Program. For example, in the *NYT*, Dewan (2007) reported:

“At the state level, officials have allocated \$6.3 billion for the Road Home’s assistance program for homeowners, dwarfing the \$869 million allocated to the Small Rental Property Program... And when the homeowner program faced a shortfall, ...the Louisiana Recovery Authority, which controls the money, recently voted to transfer 5 percent of the budget for renters to the fund for homeowners. Walter J. Leger Jr., the chairman of the authority, said the 5 percent transfer was temporary to satisfy Congressional demands. ...Mr. Leger said the state’s focus had been on homeowners in part because landlords were more likely to be insured, but he acknowledged the need to do more to replenish the city’s work force. ‘We’d like to get more money for the rental program, if Washington will help,’ he said.”

Dewan (2007) argued officials left landlords and renters to rely on private market solutions, which compounded the vulnerability of renters by decreasing the speed at which the affordable housing market recovered.

Both samples portrayed the SRPP design as problematic because the process made funds inaccessible. In the *TP*, Reckdahl (2008b) used a PolicyLink study to highlight similar design problems between the homeowner and small rental programs:

“More than half of the applicants were stuck in the initial stage, called verification, according to [a] report [released by PolicyLink], a stage that also plagued the Road Home [Homeowner Assistance P]rogram, researchers stated. Another obstacle in the rental program: Because of federal requirements, it is a reimbursement program, so most landlords have to get private financing and then recoup their investment, a substantial hardship for those who are paying mortgages on their property without any rental income, according to the report. Until the slow-moving programs begin producing more rental units in New Orleans, rents are likely to stay at current levels, too steep for many of the city’s workers, the report stated.”

Reckdahl (2008b) suggested the failure to support the rebuilding of small rental properties compounded the vulnerability of landlords, who lost a source of pre-storm income, and low-wage workers, who could not afford rents in the tight post-Katrina housing market.

To assist renters with temporary housing, FEMA created temporary travel trailer communities and offered housing vouchers, which covered private market rents (Buron & Locke, 2013). The samples showed both programs contained problems that exacerbated vulnerability. In the *NYT*, Dewan (2007) suggested isolated trailer park locations with limited public transportation compounded the vulnerability of carless residents, who could not reach jobs or stores.

“...[G]overnment solutions like the trailer parks have turned out to be obstacles, especially for the many evacuees like Ms. Cole, who has no car and lost her job at Jack in the Box when she could no longer get a ride to work. At Sugar Hill [a FEMA trailer park], 18 miles from the nearest supermarket, the public bus stops only four times a week” (Dewan, 2007).

Saulny (2007) indicated when FEMA officials decided to close temporary housing assistance programs renters would become more vulnerable because affordable housing had not been repaired.

“The sense of an impending housing crisis grew stronger last week with FEMA’s announcement on Wednesday that it would close all the trailer camps it runs for victims of the 2005 hurricanes on varying schedules by the end of May [2008]. More than 900 families are living in FEMA trailer parks around the city. The agency said its action was intended to hasten the move of residents to permanent housing from trailers. ... ‘FEMA and the federal bureaucracy seem oblivious to the fact that virtually no new affordable rental housing has yet appeared in New Orleans to replace what was lost,’ said Martha J. Kegel, executive director of Unity of Greater New Orleans, a group of 60 agencies that house and feed the homeless. ‘It will take a long time for enough replacement affordable housing to be built. To withdraw housing assistance to the neediest people is a shirking of federal

responsibility for the design failure of the federal levees in New Orleans, which was the cause of most of the destruction of affordable housing here' (Saulny, 2007).

Saulny (2007) quoted Kegel, the executive director of Unity of Greater New Orleans, to place blame for the lack of affordable housing on the federal government, which determined levee design and maintenance. Saulny (2007) emphasized the disconnection between federal agencies and realities of the housing crisis in New Orleans. She reported FEMA officials defended the decision to close trailer parks by implying it would speed up recovery for those families (2007). Saulny (2007) challenged the response by noting that closing temporary housing forced families to compete in a rental market where UNITY found the lack of affordable options caused homelessness rates in New Orleans to double after the disaster (Jervis, 2008).

The samples reported HUD's temporary housing voucher program also contained design and implementation issues. For two years, FEMA provided housing vouchers to displaced residents (Buron & Locke, 2013). At the end of 2007, HUD created the Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP-Katrina) and assumed responsibility for administering housing vouchers for almost 36,000 families throughout the affected region that did not receive HUD assistance before Hurricane Katrina (2013). Under DHAP-Katrina, HUD continued paying landlords directly as FEMA had done and implemented changes, such as, "declining rental assistance payments ...intended to transition households over time to greater responsibility for their housing costs; and... case management services ...to help [households] move toward greater self-sufficiency and stable, permanent housing" when the program closed in August 2009 (Buron & Locke, 2013, p. viii). In a sampled three-year anniversary *TP* article, Reckdahl (2008b) questioned the decision to end DHAP-Katrina when the post-Katrina housing market in New Orleans remained unaffordable.

“PolicyLink used labor statistics to determine which workers could afford \$978 per month, the average cost of a New Orleans two-bedroom apartment. Based on the premise that up to one-third of a person’s monthly income should go toward rent, many of the city’s workers fell short: A New Orleans short-order cook can only afford \$471 each month, a bank teller \$504, a home-health aide \$524, a New Orleans firefighter \$747 and a New Orleans Police Department patrol officer \$954. Those rents may also be unaffordable for many of the 14,000 families in the metro area who depend on rental assistance from the Disaster Housing Assistance Program, which is slated to end at the end of February [2009].”

Reckdahl (2008b) relied on a PolicyLink report to indicate the post-Katrina housing market priced out working class and blue collar renters because the recovery programs did not stimulate the creation of affordable housing in proportion to demand.

The *NYT* sampled articles framed DHAP-Katrina case management services as inadequate because of its design and implementation. Dewan (2009) interviewed a Baton Rouge homeless program psychologist to highlight a flaw in housing assistance programs that did not recognize households had different abilities to develop strategies to return to stable, independent living arrangements.

“Social workers in the region... say the federal government has been slow to learn: it is not enough simply to give money, or rent vouchers, to people unable to strategize for themselves. ...‘It’s easier just to throw money at people and then after a year cut them off,’ said Toni Bankston, a psychologist at Neighbor’s Keeper, a nonprofit group in Baton Rouge that works with the Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless to provide comprehensive assistance to victims of Hurricane Katrina. Neighbor’s Keeper itself was making little progress with many of its clients...until it added mental health care to its services” (Dewan, 2009).

Dewan (2009) claimed the federal government “spent more than \$200 million on case management for victims of Hurricane Katrina and Rita,” but the program did not offer sustained support or mental health services. Saulny (2007) and Dewan (2009) reported federal caseworkers did not follow-up with residents or help them find permanent housing. Saulny (2007) argued

residents unable to afford housing and unable to be placed in permanent federal housing assistance programs ended up homeless whereas two years later Dewan (2009) suggested they turned to nonprofits for help as federal disaster assistance ended.

“Now, more than four years after the flood, their lives have achieved only a fragile equilibrium, with many of them still turning to private agencies for help as their government aid expires. Some have transferred to permanent government programs that pay for housing, but continue to face obstacles to self-sufficiency like clinical depression or declining health” (Dewan, 2009).

Dewan (2009) showed that without mental health services to address the trauma caused by the disaster, the poorest residents continued to struggle four years later.

The samples discussed design flaws in three recovery programs intended to temporarily house renters and to help replace affordable housing damaged by the disaster. The sampled authors showed state recovery officials prioritized homeowners at the expense of renters by allocating more money to programs to help rebuild owner-occupied versus tenant-occupied housing. Additionally the sampled articles indicated the reimbursement design reduced the effectiveness SRPP because landlords had to rely on private market solutions to rebuild and find a low-income tenant in order to receive assistance. Authors in the sample also criticized the isolated location of trailer parkers and the premature closure of temporary housing assistance before the affordable housing market recovered. Although, the New York Time sampled articles indicated DHAP-Katrina offered a tiered payment structure and case management services to help ease the transition back into independent living, Dewan (2009) and Saulny (2007) argued the services did not include mental health care and case workers often failed to follow up with residents. The samples showed renters who did not have government assistance before the storm became more vulnerable after the storm because recovery policies failed to produce results before federal housing assistance ended. Both samples indicated recovery policies for residents

who relied on government assistance before Hurricane Katrina compounded public housing residents' vulnerability as well.

Public Housing Residents: “In Storage”. With the diverse group of residents that needed housing assistance after the storm, the sampled articles also showed how the design and implementation of post-Katrina public housing programs exacerbated the vulnerability of public housing residents. Federal recovery programs for public housing residents addressed rebuilding physical complexes as well as housing displaced public housing residents in private market apartments. The samples reported design issues, such as: development models required private market investment; no vouchers for residents until HUD declared building non-repairable; renting private market apartments increased resident cost of living; and the perpetuation of poverty and segregation. The sampled articles also described implementation problems that included: New Orleans landlords refused to participate in the Section 8 program; Public Housing Authorities denied resident requests to transfer their housing voucher to New Orleans; and new buildings were less sturdy than the demolished buildings.

Rather than rebuild an outdated model, HUD chose to redevelop New Orleans public housing developments into mixed income communities with fewer units for low-income households and increase the number of federal housing vouchers in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, colloquially known as Section 8. The *NYT* and Times Picayune samples reported the private-public partnership required private investment to rebuild public housing. In the *TP* sample, Reckdahl (2009b) quoted Raquel Rolnik, United Nations Human Rights Council, special rapporteur on adequate housing, to argue redevelopment models stalled the city's recovery: *“The national recession and housing crisis worsened the post-Katrina [affordable housing] shortage, [UN official Rolnik] said, complicated by the government's reliance on*

privately managed, mixed-income redevelopments to replace the large public complexes”

(Reckdahl, 2009b). Reckdahl (2009b) suggested recovery strategies exacerbated the housing shortage because they did not account for the status of national economy and housing market even though plans hinged on private investment.

The reliance on public private partnerships to fuel recovery during a recession was not the only design issues the samples reported. The sample reported three primary design issues for residents switched from traditional public housing to Section 8 vouchers. In the *TP* sample, Reckdahl (2009b) indicated HUD rules delayed when residents could be transferred to the HCV program by quoting Laura Tuggle, managing attorney for Southeastern Louisiana Legal Services' Housing Unit and local guide for the U. N. tour: *“The fate of some apartment buildings is still up in the air. Until HUD formally decides that a developer can’t rebuild a complex, its former residents can’t receive Section 8 vouchers.”* The article described a complex that waited four years for HUD to determine it would not be rebuilt. Reckdahl (2009b) reported the delay created implementation issues because resident contact information became outdated, making it harder to notify residents of their eligibility to receive rental assistance.

Two sampled *TP* articles reported the voucher program increased residents’ cost of living. Both programs required residents to pay a portion of their rent; however, most private market landlords required tenants to pay utilities (i.e.: gas, electric, water, trash collection, etc.), which public housing rent included (Popkin et al., 2004). Reckdahl (2011) showed this presented an obstacle for residents on fixed incomes:

“After HUD shuttered [public housing development, CJ] Peete, the sisters joined a group of other residents to oppose the demolition. They flew to Washington and spoke before Congress. They testified in federal court, saying they found it almost impossible on \$600 monthly disability checks to keep up with groceries, medication

and their share of the Section 8 voucher rent along with new bills for utilities and water” (Reckdahl, 2011).

Reckdahl (2011) argued redevelopment compounded the vulnerability of disabled residents, who experienced an increase in expenses because policy, not income, changed.

The sampled articles reported independent studies conducted by a local nonprofit found the HCV program failed to reduce concentrated poverty. Ten years after Hurricane Katrina, Webster (2015) used a Data Center study to argue recovery strategies perpetuated the social problems officials claimed they fixed due to poor design and implementation:

“The idea was that vouchers would give people who lived in poverty-stricken communities such as Iberville, St. Bernard, B. W. Cooper and Magnolia a choice. Instead of being trapped in public housing developments for generations, they could move their families to areas with less poverty and crime, better schools, access to health care and job opportunities. ...However, instead of breaking up and dispersing concentrated pockets of poverty, the voucher program simply moved them from one area to another with only slight changes in population percentages... Instead of creating opportunity, in many cases the increase in vouchers perpetuated poverty and segregation, the Data Center Found. Housing vouchers, in theory, are better suited to help people rise out of poverty than public housing where low-poverty or middle-class communities don’t exist, Seicshnaydre [co-author of the Data Center report] said. But the way the program is currently set up and administered, it is failing to fulfill that promise.”

Similar to Dewan (2009), Webster (2015) reported the Data Center study recommended HUD offer extensive counseling to public housing residents transitioning into the HCV program for *“low-income families to view housing choice as more than a means of short-term survival, but rather as a means of expanding long-term opportunity.”*

The sampled *TP* articles showed the HCV program met with implementation issues because of local race and class prejudice. In the *TP*, Webster (2015) wrote: *“82 percent of landlords in New Orleans refused to accept vouchers or placed unreasonable requirements on*

the tenants, according to a 2009 report by the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center” (Webster, 2015). The article framed landlords as a significant barrier to expanding choice for low-income minorities because of stereotypes about Section 8 renters (Webster, 2015). LaRose (2015) quoted Andreanecia Morris, vice president of Providence Community Housing, to describe the impact of “*Section 8 stigma*”:

“The recovery period led some landlords not only to increase rents, but also to become more selective with their tenants. The end result, [Morris] said, is that government-subsidized renters wind up paying as much or more than market-rate tenants. Much of this is based on the false perception that Section 8 renters are more expensive tenants because they do not take care of their properties. Morris said the remedy must come from landlords, across the rental range, who have to become better property managers. ‘Trifling knows no social-economic barriers,’ Morris said. ‘...The notion that ‘those people’ are worth a premium is also a big problem in this city when it comes to the subsidized market.’”

In contrast to LaRose (2015), who used Morris to frame landlord disdain for Section 8 tenants as a class-based stigma, Webster (2015) quoted a Data Center report to portray race as the underlying issue:

“‘Given that over 90 percent of voucher users in the New Orleans metro in 2010 were Black, the existence of rental discrimination on the basis of race serves as a real and persistent barrier to voucher users’ access to housing opportunity,’ the report states. ‘When considering the prevalence of discrimination on the basis of voucher use, the barriers to opportunity for voucher holders in New Orleans appear particularly acute.’”

These sampled authors disagreed on the cause of the negative stereotypes but reported the same result: the HCV program failed to increase neighborhood opportunity because landlords in neighborhoods with more opportunity refuse to participate in the program. The sample showed the design of the program did not recognize structural barriers that constrain the choices of low-

income families. Webster (2015) reported the Data Center report suggested landlords also needed counseling services for the voucher program to deconcentrate poverty.

One sampled article claimed displaced public housing residents could not return because HUD policies prevented residents from transferring their housing vouchers to New Orleans. In the *TP*, Reckdahl (2008a) wrote:

“In theory, Section 8 vouchers are ‘portable’ -- transferable to anywhere in the United States. But many evacuees have had transfers denied or delayed because of a HUD loophole allowing local agencies to reject moves to ‘higher-rent’ areas like New Orleans. ...At the meeting... where Houston Housing Authority officials announced a halt on New Orleans transfers..., Clara Armstrong, 66, pleaded with officials. ‘They said I could go to somewhere else in Louisiana,’ she said. ‘I was crying. I told them that the storm sent me from New Orleans, not Kenner, not LaPlace, not Slidell. New Orleans is where I want to go.’ Her pleas ignored, she gave up, thinking she’d have to leave without a voucher or move to a suburb.”

The article quoted displaced resident, Clara Armstrong, to show public housing residents wanted to return, but policy blocked them (Reckdahl, 2008a). Reckdahl (2008a) noted, *“In April, in response to a news report, HUD stepped in to correct the snafu by creating a special exception for hurricane evacuees”* that removed the *“financial incentive to reject transfers,”* but argued limiting, *“[HUD’s] ‘right to return’ policy to all HUD-assisted households who were living in New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina hit ...ignores people who first got Section 8 in other cities after being driven from New Orleans by the flood.”* In Reckdahl's (2008a) view when HUD officials attempted to address the policy issue that prevented transfers, they created a new gap that left some displaced residents vulnerable and unable to return despite their desire to do so. Reckdahl (2008a) also showed local PHAs continued to deny transfers for eligible households after the rule change:

“After HUD addressed the problem, Martin resumed plans to move home with her two children. Yet despite phone calls, e-mail messages and in-person visits, ‘my paperwork never moved,’ she said. On May 31, when her lease ended, Houston [Housing Authority] still hadn’t faxed the proper forms to New Orleans. Her Houston landlord gave her a 14-day extension, but as the 12th day passed, her documents were nowhere in sight. ‘My kids and I will be homeless as of this weekend,’ she said. ...[Egana] faced immediate ouster from her place because Section 8 stopped paying rent to her Houston landlord after a series of inspections failed... But even with an eviction hanging over her head, no one could expedite her New Orleans paperwork, Egana said. And to move without Section 8 approval is considered ‘abandonment,’ a voucher-revoking violation that she and Martin were determined to avoid. ... Despite HUD’s work on the issue, some clear-cut requests are still denied. ...Egana and Martin are now back home, thanks to help from HUD’s Washington office, which stepped in to get them out of Houston” (Reckdahl, 2008a).

Reckdahl (2008a) claimed changing federal policy failed to change local PHA practices without direct federal oversight.

One sampled article in each paper indicated new construction in lieu of rehabilitating public housing complexes left residents more vulnerable after the disaster. In the *TP*, Hammer (2008b) reported:

“Julie Andrews, a former resident at the Desire complex, said she much preferred the sturdy old brick buildings to a new stick-built unit she describes as thin-walled and cramped, even if it is more attractive on the outside. Opponents of the demolitions pointed to a report by John Fernandez, an architecture professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who inspected the four complexes last year. Fernandez found that the complexes feature heavy masonry buildings that are safer, stronger and cheaper to rehabilitate and bring up to code than building new stick-built units.”

Hammer’s (2008b) used a returned resident and an architecture expert to portray exterior aesthetics as the primary benefit of HUD’s redevelopment plans. Based on expert opinion, Hammer (2008b) claimed the new developments would offer less protection against future

hurricanes than the brick buildings provided. Five years later in the *NYT*, Longman (2013) corroborated Hammer's (2008b) view:

“Mixed income housing, known as The Estates, now stands in the Desire neighborhood, colorful duplexes that at least ‘look much better,’ [New Orleans native and pro-football player, Marshall] Faulk said as he drove through the area. ...All 425 units in The Estates had water and other storm damage from Hurricane Isaac last August, and residents have complained of shoddy construction and chronic problems with leaks from rainfall, according to reports by thelensnola.org, an independent, nonprofit news site.”

Hammer (2008b) placed responsibility for new developments poor ability to withstand future storms on HUD's decision to replace the buildings. Longman (2013) shifted responsibility from the federal government to the contractors responsible for redevelopment. In his point of view, the issues residents faced (hurricane damage, flooding, and chronic leaks) resulted from poor construction, not poor policy decisions (Longman, 2013).

Both samples highlighted the different housing needs that emerged from the diverse set of residents living in New Orleans when the city flooded. The sampled showed design and implementation issues with recovery policies compounded the vulnerability of homeowners, renters, and public housing residents in unique ways. Housing appeared as only one arena where recovery policy compounded the vulnerability of New Orleans residents. The next examples describe policy design and implementation issues that arose from public education policy changes.

Education Policy: Segregated Experiments

Although the sampled authors portrayed recovery as an opportunity to improve public education, they reported reforms implemented after the disaster did little to increase educational opportunities for disadvantaged families. Three *NYT* and two *TP* sampled articles portrayed recovery policies meant to improve public education as compounding vulnerability. In the *TP*,

Filosa (2006b) quoted resident activists and education leaders in the city to illustrate a fundamental flaw in the decision to privatize public education through the creation of public charter schools.

“Activist and parent Ursula Markey, whose family recently returned to New Orleans after losing their home and spending seven months in Mississippi, warned that a charter school system won’t provide equality. ‘Segregation under any other name is still segregation,’ Markey said, drawing cheers [at a community forum on New Orleans schools]” (Filosa, 2006b).

In a *NYT* article, Tough (2008) described the reformed school system in detail and echoed Filosa's (2006b) concern that the school reform measures perpetuated segregation and racial discrimination.

“... [I]n practice, the system is inherently unequal, with each network administered by different rules. ...Many parents and other observers have charged that the city’s current structure has recreated and, in fact, codified the unfairness of the prestorm system, which was generally perceived to operate on two separate tiers of achievement and opportunity. According to a 2007 report commissioned by a coalition of civic groups, ‘Community members believe that in the current system, a select group of students has the opportunity to attend high-quality public schools, while the vast majority of students -- for the most part poor and minority students -- are stuck in low-performing schools in which they have little opportunity for growth and development’” (Tough, 2008).

Tough (2008) depicted school enrollment policies as responsible for perpetuating systemic discrimination and school segregation. He argued the city’s top schools used selective enrollment policies to give preferential treatment to wealthier neighborhoods and to deny admission to students with lower scores or from poorer neighborhoods (2008). Tough (2008) and Filosa (2006b) presented community quotes to suggest residents saw these policies as trapping poor students of color in lower performing schools.

Two sampled NYT articles questioned the philosophy underpinning education reforms and its impact on the changes instituted during recovery. Tough (2008) wrote,

“For many years now, the central debate in American education has been over just how much schools can do to improve the low rate of achievement among poor children. While it is true that for decades the children of New Orleans toiled in a substandard school system, they have also continually faced countless other obstacles to success -- inadequate health care, poorly educated parents, exposure to high rates of violent crime and a popular culture that often denigrates mainstream achievement. And though the hurricane washed away the school system, it didn’t wash away their other problems. In fact, for most children it compounded them with a whole new set of troubles: wrecked homes, frequent relocations, divided families, post-traumatic stress. Were public schools really the right vehicle to attack all of those problems? Were a blazer and a necktie and a lot of hard work enough to get Tony Petite to college? For Hardrick and Sanders and the dozens of other education reformers I spoke to in New Orleans since my first trip there in March, the answer was a firm yes. They didn’t deny the daunting spectrum of problems facing the children they were trying to educate. But they said they believed they could overcome them in the classroom -- and that the new educational terrain in New Orleans had significantly increased their chances of success.”

Tough (2008) suggested reformers thought low educational attainment among poor and minority children could be corrected by the classroom alone even though they acknowledged these children faced multiple challenges that had little to do with school. The post-Katrina education landscape became an “experiment” to prove a decentralized system of governance could improve educational outcomes for poor, minority youth across the country (Tough, 2008). However, Tough (2008) showed not everyone agreed with the reformers and Paul Pastorek, Louisiana superintendent of education between 2007 and 2011, who stated: *“fixing a public-school system is not at its root a question of curriculum or personnel or even money. It is a question of governance.”*

“...Diane Ravitch, a historian of education who has spent decades studying and writing about the often dispiriting process of school reform, ...was skeptical that a change in the governance model would solve the problems plaguing New Orleans’s schools. ‘The fundamental issue in American education -- I say this after 40 years of having read and studied and written about the problems -- is one that is demographic[.]’ . . . Poor children, Ravitch said, simply face too many problems outside the classroom. ‘If you don’t buttress whatever happens in school with social and economic changes that give kids a better chance in life and put their families on a more stable footing, then schools alone are not going to solve the problems of poor student performance. There has to be a range of social and economic strategies to support and enhance whatever happens in school’” (Tough, 2008).

Tough (2008) used Ravitch to assert the classroom was only one part of the solution to increasing educational attainment for disadvantaged students. In his view, the education achievement gap between races and classes required social and economic changes for poor and minority families in society at large in addition to school reform.

Five years later, Carr (2013) described how the most vulnerable students fared under the experimental education reforms.

“The most challenging students -- those with severe special needs, a history of school expulsions or a criminal record -- can also suffer disproportionately from a narrow focus on school improvement and test score gains. These are the students the schools have the least incentive to enroll (during my years reporting on New Orleans charters, I witnessed some cases where school leaders forced these students into withdrawing). Yet they are also the ones who must be reached if the city hopes to reduce its unconscionably high rates of gun violence and incarceration” (Carr, 2013).

In Carr’s (2013) account, school reforms missed the most vulnerable students because they emphasized standardized test scores and failed to address the diverse needs of poor minority students. She used the experience of one African American student to illustrate the limited focus and impact of school reform policy:

“... [T]his student required more than the school could give him -- even with a designated mentor on hand. ‘He needs and deserves a full-day therapy program that does not exist,’ said Ben Marcovitz, the school’s founder. He ended up being arrested on suspicion of armed robbery last year. His needs, like those of countless students, proved too complex for his teachers to address alone. It didn’t help that, in 2009, state officials closed the New Orleans Adolescent Hospital, significantly reducing the treatment options for teenagers with mental health crises” (Carr, 2013).

Carr (2013) reported charter schools lacked mental health resources to address the problems that poor, African American students faced. In Carr’s (2013) view, state policy compounded the vulnerability of poor students of color by imposing educational reforms that could not meet all of their needs and by reducing adolescent mental health facilities. To Filosa (2006b), Tough (2008), and Carr (2013), school reforms exacerbated vulnerability because administrators found ways to exclude or push out lower performing students. The authors agreed that impoverished communities, and the children who live in them, need more than education reforms to improve life chances for disadvantaged youth. The sampled authors also argued the narrow focus on test score improvement to end poverty allowed recovery officials to neglect the mental health needs of disadvantaged children, who were traumatized by violent neighborhoods and the disaster.

Two articles in the *TP* highlighted implementation issues that arose from school reform policies and compounded the vulnerability of poor, minority students. Longman (2013) quoted New Orleans native and pro football star, Marshall Faulk, to critique the decision to make New Orleans an open school district, meaning students can attend any school in the city – not just the one located in their neighborhood.

“Even before Katrina, Faulk noted, it was challenging to convince kids in the impoverished neighborhood to come to school and stay in school and believe that an education would get them anywhere. The parents and alumni who fought to keep Carver open, he said, understood that busing students to other parts of the city would

only add another layer of risk and discouragement” (Longman, 2013).

Longman (2013) explained in theory an open district allows students near poorly performing schools to attend higher performing schools located in other neighborhoods, but suggested implementing the policy resulted in long commutes for students bused to schools outside of their neighborhood. In Longman’s (2013) view, long bus rides compounded student vulnerability because they discouraged at-risk students from attending school.

The *TP* sample showed the implementation of school reform policies led to more issues. Dreilinger (2013) reported on a community forum about the state of education in New Orleans eight years after Hurricane Katrina. Dreilinger (2013) stated parents, residents, and activists at the forum, “...*reiterated familiar themes: the prevalence of Teach for America, which puts young college graduates in classrooms; accusations of charter schools cheating to falsely inflate test scores; subpar facilities; and the slow pace of the \$1.8 billion school building plan.*” Dreilinger (2013) highlighted several implementation issues mentioned by both samples. First, she indicated the school reform movement replaced the city’s veteran teachers with recent graduates seeking student loan forgiveness grants in exchange for teaching in high-risk communities for a few years after graduating from college (2013). Secondly, she agreed with Carr (2013) that the emphasis on test scores to grade and fund schools created an incentive for charter school administrators to raise test scores by any means necessary, including giving students answers to standardized test questions as well as pushing out lower performing students (Dreilinger, 2013). Third, her article criticized the pace of replacing school buildings, which moved slowly, especially in poor communities of color, and resulted in students continuing to attend school in trailers more than seven years after the state privatized New Orleans public education (Dreilinger, 2013).

The sampled articles portrayed school reform as compounding the vulnerability of disadvantaged students in policy design and implementation. In both samples, the authors reported minority students lost experienced teachers that knew their culture and had school administrators that prioritized test scores over educating students. Additionally, they documented minority communities waited years for their neighborhood schools to be rebuilt and lost all say in how they operated. The *NYT* sampled articles suggested education reform that addressed school governance alone could not decrease the achievement gap. Tough (2008) and Carr (2013) quoted experts to argue improving life chances for disadvantaged students required social and economic changes in society and mental health services to deal with pre- and post-Katrina trauma. The next section further explores how the samples portrayed changes in healthcare as increasing the vulnerability of residents.

Healthcare Policy: Limited Access for All

Both samples depicted post-Katrina healthcare policy as increasing the vulnerability of returned residents. Two *TP* and six *NYT* sampled articles discussed how healthcare policy compounded vulnerability after Hurricane Katrina. During recovery, city and state officials chose to build a new hospital instead of repairing Charity Hospital, a state-run teaching hospital that served the city's poor, uninsured, and mentally ill before the disaster. It took ten years for the new medical complex that replaced Charity Hospital to open. The sampled authors found this compounded the vulnerability of returned residents, who encountered limited healthcare options for a decade.

The sampled articles indicated the long delay to replace Charity Hospital decreased the stability and security of residents in need of medical attention. In the *TP*, Moran (2007) quoted a Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation report to show how the slow decision-making process that

surrounded rebuilding Charity Hospital compounded the vulnerability of uninsured residents, who experienced limited healthcare access after the disaster. “*As the discussion about rebuilding Charity Hospital continues, those who formerly relied on the hospital reported having significant health problems and obvious difficulty accessing care*” (Moran, 2007). Moran (2007) indicated that the vulnerability of uninsured residents increased because the study found residents reported deteriorated mental and physical health as a result of the disaster but had less access to care and often relied on emergency rooms as opposed to primary care physicians.

Both samples reported the absence of Charity Hospital had negative impacts on psychiatric patients as well as uninsured residents.

“Before Katrina, there were more than 400 psychiatric beds in the New Orleans area, many of them at Charity Hospital. Only 65 psychiatric beds remain, and only two were available a few days ago, said John ‘Jack’ Finn, president of the Metropolitan Hospital Council of New Orleans. ‘It’s an enormous problem,’ said Dr. Jan Johnson, a Tulane University psychiatrist. ‘If someone needs to be stabilized because they’re suicidal or psychotic, they end up going to an emergency room, and the wait is days, not hours’” (Hunter & Pope, 2006).

In the *TP*, Hunter and Pope (2006) used expert testimony to suggest the reduction in inpatient mental health services compounded the vulnerability of the mentally ill, who had to wait days to receive treatment. In the *NYT*, Barringer (2006) quoted Cynthia Matherne, the designated regional coordinator for emergency management in Orleans, Jefferson, St. Bernard, and Plaquemines to show how the lack of healthcare facilities impacted returned residents with mental or chronic disorders.

“[L]ong-term acute care, rehabilitation [and] psychiatric facilities, ‘...have not reopened,’ Ms. Matherne said. ‘So all the psych patients end up being held in the E.R.’s. And when you’re trying to discharge patients, there’s no long-term care to discharge them to. There’s no discharge to hospice care because there’s none available.’ Home health aides are virtually nonexistent, she

added. ‘Hospitals are confronted with the question: How you are going to discharge these people?’ Ms. Matherne said” (Barringer, 2006).

Barringer (2006) found the post-Katrina healthcare landscape lost more than Charity Hospital. In her view, the slow pace of repairing long-term care facilities meant functioning hospitals had no place to discharge mentally or chronically ill patients, which exacerbated bed shortage issues because hospitals had difficulty discharging chronically ill patients to clear beds for those stuck in the emergency room. Hunter and Pope (2006) also suggested residents with psychological disorders suffered the most from slow healthcare infrastructure recovery:

“The lack of resources is more acutely felt in the realm of mental health care, and patients with a history of mental illness are most at risk. Mental health officials and law enforcement agencies in the New Orleans area have reported a sharp increase in the number of requests to pick up mentally ill patients, a rise in the number of people who resist violently, or both. ...Dr. Jeffrey Rouse, the deputy psychiatric coroner for Orleans Parish... said the rise in violent resistance since Katrina is a direct result of the all but total obliteration of the mental health system in the New Orleans area. ‘There is no effective mental health infrastructure for the most severely mentally ill, the psychotic, the dangerous and the suicidal people who need to be hospitalized,’ he said.”

In contrast to Barringer (2006), who depicted hospitals and emergency rooms as confronting mental health issues, Hunter and Pope (2006) reported the post-Katrina healthcare system left the police to deal with mentally ill residents due to the absence of in- and out-patient facilities to treat pre-existing and hurricane-related psychological disorders.

Although Hunter and Pope (2006) viewed mentally ill residents as the most susceptible to shortages in the post-Katrina healthcare landscape, they quoted Dr. Daphne Glindmeyer, director of West Jefferson Medical Center’s Behavioral Medical Center, to show more people than those with pre-storm health issues had their vulnerability compounded by the lack of healthcare infrastructure in New Orleans after the disaster:

“Hurricane stress has become a dilemma for many more people than those who are chronically mentally ill or who have previously struggled with depression... [B]ad stress can be as debilitating as an illness, she said. And it can make those in poor health even sicker. ...The indicators of stress and depression are almost identical because they’re so closely related, Glindmeyer said. In fact, residents could be plagued by Katrina stress for so long that it can morph into a clinical depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder. And in New Orleans, depression and anxiety can lead to other problems. ‘When we’re down and can’t sleep, what’s the first thing we New Orleanians do?’ Glindmeyer asked. ‘You might say, ‘Let me just have a drinky-poo or a cocktail or two and everything is going to be fine.’ But before you know it, you’ve got a drinking problem, too” (Hunter & Pope, 2006).

Hunter and Pope (2006) suggested the culture of the city, which provides easy access to alcohol, made New Orleanians more vulnerable to developing substance abuse issues than may be the case for other cities.

Six years later in a *NYT* wellness blog article, Chen (2012), a medical doctor, portrayed the development of mental health disorders as a normal part of surviving disasters.

“Most commonly and most immediately, the survivors suffered post-traumatic stress symptoms like recurrent nightmares, flashbacks, a hair-trigger temper and an emotional ‘numbing,’ much of which could be considered normal in the first couple of months after a disaster. ...Over time, when those symptoms abated, survivors were able to move on. When they didn’t, or when other mood disorders like anxiety and depression appeared, mental health issues quickly became a leading cause of disability for survivors, further hampering other efforts at recovery” (Chen, 2012).

Chen (2012) echoed Glindmeyer’s assessment that long-term stress experienced after natural disasters can lead to mental disorders, such as depression and anxiety. Although it was common for survivors to develop post-traumatic stress disorder, Chen (2012) asserted that when left unaddressed psychological issues became a barrier to individual recovery. Chen (2012) continued:

“But the research has also revealed that we can mitigate the psychological fallout, even after the disaster has occurred. Studies from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have shown that what communities, governments and even elected officials do in the weeks, months and years that follow can have a significant effect on how individuals fare psychologically. For example, among Hurricane Katrina survivors, there were striking differences in the rates of mental health disorders, depending on how people felt about the difficulties they had finding food and shelter. Survivors who continued to face such adversity because of the government’s slow response had significantly higher rates of mental health problems” (Chen, 2012).

In Chen’s (2012) view, the slow pace of government action and recovery exacerbated the vulnerability of residents unable to secure basic necessities. Chen (2012) reported difficulties experienced during recovery worsen psychological trauma, which makes individual recovery harder to attain. Chen (2012) and Hunter and Pope (2006) agreed a lack of healthcare facilities and medical professionals limited treatment options and created more incentive for residents to turn to drugs or alcohol to alleviate storm-related trauma.

Both samples portrayed decisions that left the city without healthcare facilities for ten years as compounding the vulnerability of returned residents. However, the sampled authors agreed healthcare shortages impacted mentally ill residents the most. The samples used expert opinions to highlight the negative consequences of post-Katrina healthcare shortages, which included: higher rates of violently resisting arrest and relying on emergency rooms rather than primary care physicians. increased emergency room wait times from hours to days, developing additional psychological issues (such as depression or anxiety), and developing substance abuse issues. Chen (2012) also asserted government officials could facilitate healing or sickness depending on the actions and policies they implement. The sampled authors showed the slow pace of rebuilding healthcare facilities exacerbated health issues for all residents by limiting access to care.

Summary

Both samples found policy design and implementation issues created disparate impacts along race and class lines. In the *TP*, Hammer (2008b) wrote:

“A United Nations treaty committee ruled Friday [March 7, 2008] that the United States’ response to Hurricane Katrina has had a greater negative impact on displaced Black residents and called on the federal government to do more to guarantee that they can return to affordable housing in their hometowns.”

Hammer (2008b) reported the U.N. committee found the federal government guilty of implementing racially discriminatory recovery policies that compounded the vulnerability of poor African Americans more so than wealthy, non-minority residents. The article emphasized international law defined racial discrimination by the effect of policy decisions on minorities, regardless of the intent of the policies. The authors suggested U.S. officials denied charges of racial discrimination by indicating the intent to discriminate did not exist even when disparate impacts were clear.

In the first theme, the sampled articles portrayed recovery as an opportunity to improve the city’s quality of life for all residents, especially low-income minorities. In the *NYT*, Dewan (2009) described what happened to the city’s most vulnerable:

“They were among the region’s poorest people before the storm hit in August 2005, their lives once supported in New Orleans by a dense web of family ties and familiarity. Many were elderly, sick, addicted, mentally ill or otherwise disabled, unskilled or uneducated, and traumatized. Their children were behind in school or acting out. The storm was initially hailed as an opportunity to give them a better life, but as time progressed, thousands of families disappeared into the yawning gaps in government aid.”

Dewan (2009) claimed quality of life improvements did not manifest for vulnerable populations because recovery policy contained design flaws and implementation issues. In a ten-year anniversary *NYT* article, Harris (2015) presented a similar view:

“Of course, many of the city’s pre-storm problems persist. Its poorest residents have received few benefits from its revived economy, the school makeover may not be quite as successful as boosters claim, and some advocates worry that a new hospital will cater to a rich clientele at the expense of services to the poor”
(Harris, 2015).

Both samples depicted recovery as failing to improve the lives of the city's most vulnerable residents, but as Harris (2015) indicated, competing narratives existed that supported opposing views on recovery policy.

Some sampled articles portrayed recovery policies as a successful. However, the samples showed the success was limited to certain segments of the population. Both samples also provided more emphasis on negative outcomes than positive outcomes. The sampled articles argued design and implementation issues limited the ability of recovery policies to help vulnerable populations. Sampled authors used the Road Home programs to show how stereotypes and poor assumptions created ineffective policies for poor and minority homeowners and landlords. They also described situations where recovery policy left gaps in assistance that poor and minority residents had difficulty overcoming. The next chapter explores the findings from the interviews, which allowed the participants to describe how recovery policy and gaps in assistance influenced their decision-making process as they contemplated return.

Opportunity Knocks: The Pushes and Pulls of Place

The content analysis findings showed recovery policy contained design and implementation issues that created gaps in assistance. The participants framed these gaps as needs for which there was little or no help. From the deductive 'influences' code, a list of pros and cons about opportunities in New Orleans and in Houston emerged that influenced participants' decisions about return. The interviews showed each city offered a set of opportunities and challenges that participants experienced differently according to their life circumstances at the time of the levee failure. The inductive family and mental health codes showed the nuanced and varied trajectories that existed within the sample. For example, some participants stayed in Houston but stated their family returned to New Orleans. Others participants returned but found their family and friends stayed displaced. Additionally, some participants described living in Houston prolonged their emotional trauma while others moved to Houston as a strategy to heal.

Although participants had different experiences after Hurricane Katrina, they described similar factors that pulled them to New Orleans. Within the deductive 'influences' code, these factors emerged from the inductive codes: place attachment, culture, and pre-Katrina commitments (i.e.: employment, college, property). Participants viewed New Orleans as a 'one-of-a-kind' city with a unique culture that they missed and feared may die if residents did not return. Respondents also indicated the disaster interrupted long-term plans and commitments. Some socioeconomic investments, like retirement, proved to be too important to sacrifice by starting over in Houston, which pulled case 1 participants to return despite the challenging circumstances they encountered in New Orleans after the disaster.

All participants expressed the desire to return because New Orleans was home. However, circumstances emerged that pushed participants to choose long-term displacement and permanent relocation despite desires and plans to return. Participants acknowledged the city had negative cultural aspects, such as violence, racism, corruption, and partying, that deterred some from returning because they viewed themselves as more productive and their environments as safer than New Orleans could offer. Participants also portrayed recovery policy decisions as pushing residents to stay displaced. Policies limited participant access to housing, education, healthcare, and employment opportunities in New Orleans. Unable to find the means to return, many could not fulfill their desire.

Situations in Houston also exerted pressures that influenced participants' decisions. Comprehensive, long-term disaster assistance combined with a higher quality of life in a fully functioning city pulled participants to consider establishing a new life in Houston. Participants reported other cities did not offer the same level of disaster assistance as Houston, so many relocated to Houston for disaster housing vouchers. Once participants arrived in Houston, they found better educational and economic opportunities that pulled them to stay. Some reported obstacles restricted their access to jobs and schools, but participants devised strategies to establish life in Houston and access the opportunities they saw.

Life in Houston, whether permanent or temporary, included challenges that pushed some participants to return to New Orleans. These challenges emerged from the inductive codes: culture, cost of displacement, and discrimination. Participants described cultural differences made building life in Houston difficult. They reported the size of the city as well as the way Houstonians treated them caused issues. Many participants described facing discriminatory treatment. This included being verbally assaulted and harassed as well as being denied jobs.

Some participants portrayed discriminatory treatment as a result of cultural differences where others blamed social stereotypes perpetuated by the media. The chapter explores the cycle of influences that participants described in the interviews, as depicted in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Pushes & Pulls of Place



“There’s no place like home”: Pulled to New Orleans

Two factors emerged from the ‘influences on decisions’ gross code that participants identified as motivations to return. Attachment to culture and a desire to preserve cultural traditions for future generation emerged as the primary reason participants wanted to return and rebuild their communities. All of the participants described their attachment to their culture and commented they missed the food, music, people, and outdoor culture of New Orleans while displaced. In addition to culture, some participants returned because they could not transfer their

socioeconomic investments to other locations. For example, participants with decades invested in a retirement plan found starting over in Houston required sacrificing retirement benefits. Homeownership and college also emerged as pre-Katrina commitments that pulled participants to return after the disaster.

The content analysis and interviews revealed a contradiction in assumptions about who would return. The sampled articles suggested planners assumed residents would not return unless persuaded through social improvements. The interviews showed participants evacuated, assuming they would be back quickly to repair damages and continue their lives under similar social conditions. A teenager when Hurricane Katrina hit, Regina Walker stated: *“We really thought we were going to come back to something. I mean I remember my mom... was mad because we didn’t clean our room and she got really, really pissed before we left. She was like, ‘I do not want to come back to a filthy house.’”* Respondents knew Hurricane Katrina could cause major damages, but they assumed their life would be there to return to after the storm passed.

Marcus Booker explained:

“It was sort of almost like a normal weekend trip, ya know. That’s ...how people went about leaving for the hurricane anyway. ...We didn’t pack everything we could’ve packed ... ‘cause years in the past if we evacuated for something it was only for a short period of time. You leave, go away, come back, and nothing’s changed. That’s the kind of mind set we had, ya know. Wherever you ended up going was vacation.”

After it became apparent that the levee failure would cause long-term displacement, participants spoke of when, not if, they would return. Jason Boissiere reunited with his parents and siblings at the Reliant Center in Houston. At their first breakfast in the shelter, Jason stated *“We knew we had to start over, but we had family. It was good. ...[We talked about] going back, ya know, thinking about rebuilding... Where we gonna start at?”* Although they evacuated after the

flooding, Jason Boissiere and his extended family planned to rebuild as soon as the city allowed. Jason Boissiere showed the assumptions that guided recovery in the media's perception did not match those held by participants.

Culture emerged as the primary justification for participants' attachment to New Orleans and desire to return. Eleven participants stated they wanted to return because of their culture. Steven Bell, a truck driver, described how the city's leisure-time and outside culture influenced his decision to return:

"Houston wasn't my home. There's no place like New Orleans, ya know. I've been all over, driving in America, and there's no place like New Orleans, so Houston was nowhere near New Orleans. It was nice, but in New Orleans you can go to the lake; you can sit out. You can go to the park; you can sit out. You can listen to your music. You won't be harassed."

Marcus Booker agreed: *"I've always wanted to come back home. There's no place like it here, none whatsoever. ...[Y]ou miss the way New Orleans was ...just the whole atmosphere and feeling down here."* Participants in each case viewed New Orleans as a one-of-a-kind city and stated Houston could not replace the food, music, or leisure culture with which residents identified. Some participants stated if residents had to start over, many wanted to start over where they felt comfortable.

Culture evoked the desire to return for another reason as well. Participants thought their culture would die and their history would be erased if residents stayed displaced. Joseph Johnson stated:

"Oh man, it's losing a track of culture, ya know. A preservation of culture and history, ya know. What happened in '05 with Katrina will be written in textbooks... By not having the people there, you're losing that richness, that direct connection of people who were there to tell the story."

Three participants said residents needed to return to preserve the city's way of life for future generations. For example, Marcus Booker emphasized:

“New Orleans had that sense and that feel and that culture because the way it was laid out and the people that preceded us. And those people can't get out and do those things anymore. It's all upon my generation ...to make sure we continue those traditions and those efforts to keep our city, our culture, going out here. ...I know my parents ...can't get out and do as much as they used to anymore. If they're not able to go and be in an original Illinois men's club and go to ...Mardi Gras balls and stuff like that, then I got to make sure I do ...because we want those organizations to keep going...”

In Marcus Booker's view, young professionals needed to return because they had the economic means and social power to sustain cultural traditions, including restaurants and social organizations. Marcus Booker continued,

“I challenge a lot of my friends that have left and gone somewhere else ...to come back. ...If I can be a voice of any kind to try and get certain people, movers and shakers, or people that I know just have some sort of energy, if I can get some of those people to come back, then that's part of my goal. It's really upon us to make this city what it used to be.”

Similar to Marcus Booker, three other participants admitted they wanted to help people return because they thought their culture would be lost if residents chose to start over elsewhere.

Cultural ties and place attachment were not the only factors that pulled participants to return. The interviews revealed the disaster happened while some participants were in the middle of long-term plans. Pre-Katrina commitments, such as college, property, and employment, emerged as reasons to return when participants described they had too much invested in their former lives to start over in Houston. Thomas Stevens's determination to graduate from Tulane University influenced his decision-making process:

“I knew ...I was coming back home like without a doubt. ...I have too much at stake at home. I can't leave. ...I knew ...when I found

out that school was opening back up that I was coming back. I was really waiting on the university to tell us, to say, 'Hey, we're gonna have classes again.' As soon as school said we're having classes, I was going back because I went to school on a waiver. ...I was hoping that I could continue to go to school on waiver, but my mom lost her job. As a result of that... it wound up screwing everything else up. But yeah, I was coming back because I wanted to finish at Tulane."

Thomas Stevens did not think he could transfer his life to Houston because he went to a top research institution for free. He returned in January 2006 when Tulane University reopened. To a working class student like Thomas Stevens, graduating from Tulane represented an opportunity for social mobility and an end to working multiple low-wage service jobs to make ends meet.

Owning property emerged as another pre-Katrina commitment that drew participants back. Eleven participants, including seven homeowners and four renters, stated homeownership influenced return decision-making. Paulette Watson explained:

"I wanted to come back home and I didn't know when we was gonna come back home to see about my house, to see how it was... I knew I had insurance, but this is my house, where I stayed at. And where I was, ya know, it was just something that was temporary for us. ...When we got to Sugarland although the people was nice, I was ready to go to my house, ya know, get in my bed... It's hard. It's hard. People treat ya nice, but there's nothing like your own house, getting in it, getting in your own bed, ya know."

Paulette Watson wanted to return to her house because it represented a return to stability, independence, and familiar surroundings. Steven Bell's house provided a different motivation. He stated, *"I wanted to come home because my family house, ya know. I wanted to get that back. ...My family had property when Black folks didn't have property, so I felt I needed to come back, do what I can, rebuild that house for my grandfather."* Steven Bell highlighted the significance of owning land for Black families. In his view, Steven Bell needed to repair and maintain the

family land in order to honor his grandfather's sacrifice as well as the historical struggle of the Black community to participate in the country's housing market.

In addition to housing and college, employment also emerged as a social investment that pulled residents to New Orleans. Seven participants indicated that pre-Katrina employment influenced the decisions they made after the storm. Lisa Wilson found state licensing laws restricted where her husband could work as an attorney:

“My husband is barred [licensed] there, so he had to go back. We had no way to make income... He's not barred here [in Houston], so he kept going there because he had clients there and also...he helped those from Houston that had cases there and he just would go back and forth, but he was so tired.”

Two other case 2 participants reported transferring their professional licenses in order to work while displaced. They worked in fields with similar requirements among states. However, Lisa Wilson's experience highlighted some professionals had Louisiana specific knowledge that did not transfer easily to other states.

Four participants discussed how age influenced some people's commitment to their job and led them to return. In 2005, Paulette Watson had invested 27 continuous years as a city employee, but she had borrowed from her pension years before when one of her sons faced criminal charges. She stated:

“I wanted to come back home because I had a job. I tried [to stay in Houston], but I'm at the age that I need to retire. I can't stay out here, ya know. That's why I came back home because I knowed I had a job. When they sent me a letter saying if I retire how much I would get, I knowed I would just be another Hurricane Katrina victim because I wouldn't have been able to make it off that little \$500 a month, so I had to come back home.”

The disaster interrupted people at different stages of life. Paulette Watson's experience shows that some residents returned because they could not transfer their investment in their careers to

other cities. Participants described residents close to retirement as more likely to return than young professionals, who they viewed as being able to start over easier.

For some participants, employment operated as a means to return. Respondents stated they had the desire to return and acted upon it when prior workplaces reopened or they found new jobs in New Orleans. Culture and property motivated Steven Bell to return, but employment in New Orleans enabled him to return in 2007. He explained:

“I came in for the Mardi Gras. It was the final weekend of Mardi Gras. Ya know everybody comes to New Orleans from New Orleans to the Mardi Gras. I came in during that time... so what happened was ...I was scheduled to go back to Houston the Friday, but Thursday I was going over to my old house in New Orleans to cut the grass. And I said, well let me fill out this application here at this company I knew of, and they hired me back. ...They called me that Friday. I was putting my luggage in the car to go back to Houston, and they called me for the job. So I was still making about the same as I was making in Houston, still in the same field, so when they gave me [a] chance to get home and do some things at the house, figuring I'd be [able to] fix the house up, get in it, ya know. So that's how I got back here.”

Participants indicated just because they wanted to return did not mean they could. They needed the means to live in New Orleans, such as a place to stay and a source of income.

The interviews revealed the media and participants had conflicting assumptions about return. Respondents planned to return when they evacuated for several reasons. Most importantly, participants did not expect the levee failure. They described being attached to New Orleans because of their cultural traditions and because they identified the city as home. In addition to culture and place attachment, participants stated pre-Katrina commitments influenced their decisions to return. The disaster hit when some participants found themselves close to accomplishing long-term goals. Others found their socioeconomic investments, such as property or years at a job, could not be transferred to other cities. The interviews suggested this made

starting over in Houston more of a sacrifice for some residents than others, particularly older residents close to retirement or close to paying off mortgages.

The interviews also showed fifteen participants assumed their lives would continue in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina passed. Twelve participants, including six case 2 respondents, indicated they planned to return because they identified New Orleans as home. For example, Cora Williams commented: *“I thought I would. I thought I would because it was home.”* Despite the intention and desire to continue life in New Orleans, only eight respondents found the means to move back to New Orleans, and three of the eight had left by 2010 because the means to survive did not last. The interviews showed case 2 participants experienced the pull to come home even though they chose to stay in Houston. The next section explores the factors participants identified as pushing them to leave New Orleans and deny their desire to return and continue life in New Orleans.

“You can’t go home again”: Pushed from New Orleans

As participants described their intention to return, their narratives turned to circumstances that made them postpone coming back. The government response to Hurricane Katrina and the levee failure emerged as the first obstacle. The second arose when the city reopened and participants began visiting. Seeing the destruction and living conditions pushed many to delay returning until conditions improved. However as time passed, participants stated recovery made New Orleans unrecognizable. Everything familiar was gone, and the only neighborhoods that seemed to improve between visits were places tourists visited. Some described recovery and the displacement as an intentional process designed to block the return of poor Black residents. Participants reported many of the city’s flaws became worse after the storm.

The government response to Hurricane Katrina and the levee failure deterred seven participants from returning. Participants thought all levels of government failed the people of New Orleans by offering little relief to residents in the flooded city. Edith Jones spent the storm in a hotel room provided by the Astor Crowne Plaza, where her mother worked as a tailor. Although she heard people on the street talk about help being on the way; she came to realize that help was not intended for her or her family. Edith stated:

“Seven days went by, no help. ...Ya heard that the military was coming, etc. etc. Well next door to the Astor Crowne is the Ritz Carlton Hotel. So the military comes in, and we think, ‘Okay, help is here. We’re about to get out of here.’ No, they’re there to get the rich people. Load ‘em up on the tanks. Load them up on the busses. They’re taking them to the other end of Canal Street where they had charter busses to get them out of the city or whatever they were doing to get them out of the city. ...The hotel was just fed up. On day seven, they just put everybody out. ‘That’s it. Get out. You’re on your own. Don’t want you in there. That’s a wrap.’ ...So I told my mom and my daughter to stay there and I ...walked down Poydras to see how did it look around the Superdome. No, not a good look. You saw dead bodies in the wheel chairs. Saw the older people dehydrated, slumped over, bodies exposed from the heat; they kind of burst open or swelled up from being warm. So I decided that’s not what we’re going to do. Made friends with this guy [and found out] they’re sending busses to the Westbank of New Orleans. All we have to do is get to Oakwood Mall. That’s where the busses will be. Well, had to figure how you’re going to get over there. Word was Harry Lee [Jefferson Parish Sherri] had his troops on the bridge saying, couldn’t go across. ‘Shoot to kill.’ So what we decided to do, everybody was counting the money they had in their pocket and we decided to pool our money together, found this one man, Mexican guy with a pickup truck. We told him we would give him 40 dollars to bring us across the bridge. He did. He was in such of a hurry he didn’t even get the money because he was hurrying trying to pick up this other family that was trying to go further down... Made it across. And stood there. Waited in front of Oakwood. ...and two days later, three days later. The busses finally came. By then, you’re dehydrated. You’re aggravated. So you’re thinking you’re leaving the city, but no they’re just taking you from the Westbank to drop you off on ...a dry spot on I-10 to wait for more busses to come. So once they drop you off. You have the military there. They have military meal

packets. They have cots. That's where we stayed for another four days, sleeping under the stars on I-10. Pitch black at night unless the military has their lights on, but of course you can only run so long on generators because you need the fuel. The busses finally came. They didn't tell you where you were going, basically herding cattle on busses. Families were getting split up. Kids screaming and hollering 'cause they can't be with their parents because they just toss you on a bus, no questions asked. Ended up in Texas. Ended up in Kellar, Texas to be exact, some church. They didn't say too much of anything. All you heard was welcome. That was pretty much it. Ya know, 'Get your clean clothes. We have hot food waiting on ya.' Still you don't know where you are, so how do I know I can trust you?"

Edith's narrative suggested the limited relief efforts privileged wealthier residents and people with personal transportation. She also showed participants strategized to reach help and worked with those around them when relief failed to arrive. When asked about returning, Edith stated, *"There was pretty much no conversation. [My mother] said, 'I am not going back to that place. They tried to kill us, and I will not allow them to do it again.'* So that was pretty much the end of it. *She'll go to visit, but she doesn't have a desire to live back in New Orleans."* The slow response to evacuate residents after the levees failed exacerbated the historic distrust between African Americans and government institutions. Participants expressed they no longer trusted government officials to keep them safe or assist them in times of distress.

Participants that evacuated before landfall also expressed frustration at the treatment residents received during the immediate response. Joseph explained:

"Katrina hurt, but it wasn't much of the natural disaster part. It was how the people got treated afterwards, during and afterwards. And even today, ya know, it's just like ...what's up with people's minds? How can they treat human beings like this? People who've ...gotten arrested for just trying to get a ride out of town, and the fact they took a postal truck. I'm like, if it's just going to sit there, but they ...in trouble for stealing government property.... I mean, come on now! Preserve life, and you worried about a damn truck!? I don't get it. ...You got cops breaking into people's stuff and stealing stuff outta stores... It's okay for y'all to ...steal

merchandise. These people are trying to get a freaking loaf of bread and a bottle of water - food that's going to go to waste anyway if nobody eats it, and you got all these hungry freaking people out here, thirsty, ya know. It's that kind of stuff that makes Katrina hurt for me."

Joseph framed his trauma as a result of government decisions, not the disaster. The participants reported officials punished residents that broke the law to save themselves when no rescue team arrived.

Three of the four participants that evacuated after the levee failure described the police as offering no relief. When the Lafitte Projects began to flood, Jason Boissiere walked to the Superdome, where he stayed outside waiting for busses. He described the police as “*just like regular civilians. They just had the guns.*” With his daughter, her one year old son, and some of her extended family, Shawn Jackson sheltered in place in a vacant third story apartment in the St. Bernard Public Housing Development. Similar to Edith Jones and Jason Boissiere, he explained how they devised strategies to reach relief but reported the police officers he met provided no assistance. Shawn Jackson stated:

“Somehow we had some boats floating like a pallet or whatever. Some people was on a door, ya know, floating. ...My daughter's auntie and her boyfriend, they got a boat, a little skiff and they was taking people to the bridge right there ...They got helicopters supposed to be picking people up and transporting them to safer ground. So we get to the bridge, and they say no more people was able to evacuate there, so we came back [to the St. Bernard projects]. But the next day, early in the morning, got to the bridge, we stood on the bridge for ...about 24 hours, and eventually I walked from here to New Orleans airport. My daughter had left 'cause they was taking women and children first off the bridge by helicopter. So when we went down to ...Causeway where it wasn't flooding at, and they had busses supposedly coming..., but I was out there like 16 – 18 hours, waiting and waiting. I was like where are the busses at, so I just started walking. Me and two guys that I had met... Said, ‘Man let's leave. Let's walk until we just get some assistance’, so we walk and walk. ...Walking from Causeway to the New Orleans airport. ...Early in the morning like when the sun

broke, we walking and walking, walking up Airline. Walking and walking, and once you crossed Orleans Parish line, it become another parish, so ...police pull up. Stopped us. Stopped us, us three walking. Had a bottle of hot water, briefcase and whatever they had on their back, stopped us like, 'How y'all gentlemen doing?'"We doing alright.'

In the participants' view, metro police prioritized protecting private property and maintaining law and order over helping residents evacuate.

Participants attributed the lack of immediate relief and the slow federal response to the city's demographics. Lemont Cummings evacuated to Houston with his family before Hurricane

Katrina hit. When he returned around September 7, 2005, to assess losses at his company, Edith Jones, Jason Boissiere, and Dwayne Edwards were still waiting to evacuate, and the National Guard had stopped Raymond Davis and Marcus Booker from entering New Orleans to search for family members and to check on personal property. Upon recalling the trip, Lemont Cummings commented:

“It brought back those stories. When I was a kid, my dad would tell me, ‘Do whatever you wanna do. Just don’t go into the army because this country doesn’t care a thing about black people.’ And I knew in my heart that if that had been a predominately white city the response would have totally been different. And it made me very angry. It did. It really did. It made me very angry. When I got back, my daughter who was ...6 years old. She (pause) She and I have always been very close, [but] I really didn’t want human interaction because I just needed time to process all that destruction I saw. And it just was not something that I would ever have expected to see in the United States of America. It was really. . . (pause) I don’t have the words to explain. ...There were no words to describe it. It was... It was terrifying beyond the point of watching the towers fall, beyond the point any act of war could bring. This was an act of nature, but the simple callous obtuseness that government had toward the suffering of its own people was just repulsive. I remember thinking at that moment that I had wished that someone would actually take a shot at Bush, so maybe we could get some leadership in place to do something. I remember thinking that if something had happened to him, I probably would’ve said, ‘Thank God’ for it. It was that bad. That was right after the storm.”

Lemont Cummings attributed the slow response and lack of relief to “outright blatant racism” and portrayed federal leaders as racist. Joseph Johnson agreed, but tied the response to class discrimination as well:

“The response...if it was a rich city...it would’ve been way different. People would’ve been jumping, ‘Oh, are you okay?’ Alright. (snaps) They would’ve been on it like that, ya know. But 3, 4, 5 days; however long people waited for help in New Orleans after Katrina. That was ridiculous. That was ridiculous. ...Anytime that I see stuff that happens with a natural disaster, and it’s a call for evacuation, like with the wildfires here in Texas, they just down

*play if it's ...poor black people... 'We don't need them anyway.'
...It's like they want something bad to happen, so they don't have
to deal with us. And then ...they won't have nobody put up a fight
because they know...black people have come a long way and...
when we ...agree and come together we can do some damage, good
damage, ya know. ...If it was Los Angeles, Beverly Hills, or
whatever, man, they'd a been all trying to preserve stuff. They'd be
trying to clean it up as fast as possible, ya know. ...But it's like
people look down on New Orleans because of the people and
because of the crime rate and everything else but then want it to be
on the map at the same time because it's Queen of the South and
they have ...all the good music and food and everything else that
they want."*

Participants viewed the government response as predicated on the race and class of the stereotypical New Orleans resident. They stated political leaders viewed their lives as expendable but celebrated their culture as though they existed independently of each other. These thoughts exacerbated distrust that the government would provide for their wellbeing in New Orleans and caused some participants to stay in Houston.

The lack of quick government relief emerged as only one factor that participants described as making them reluctant to return. Nine participants described visiting New Orleans after the disaster as a reason to delay return. For example, Paulette Watson described her first trip back in October or November 2005:

"It was just depressing to me because everything was white here. The cars was white. The buildings was white. The whole street was white. ...It was just sickening because ...the smell. ...It was a funny smell you would smell, and I would get sick every time that I came here...to take care of my house. . . . It used to just make me sick. I couldn't eat the whole while I was here, and I'd be glad when it was time for me to go back ...to Texas because I just couldn't stand this. ...Everybody was depressing. Everything was down. ...Everything was just all messed up and, like I said, no lights. Everything was pitch black, but everything was white. The cars was white. The buildings. I was just wondering was this on the water... Everything turned white. It was...just like another country we was staying in because it didn't look like New Orleans, ya know, the place that you called home. ...It was just awful. I don't

know how else to describe it. It just was awful when I first came here, and it stayed awful for a long time.”

Through seeing the destruction, participants stated they realized it would take years for the city to recover and that they could not resume their life as it existed before the disaster. At the beginning of his 2011 interview, Thomas Stevens remarked he should have stayed in Houston. When asked to elaborate, he explained: *“I said that I shouldn’t’ve come back because I left a comfortable ...already functioning, moving society to come back to something that was devastated with a spirit that was devastated.”* Participants indicated the importance of community morale to individual recovery and expressed relief efforts, which exacerbated community distrust of government actions, made it harder to adjust to the changes in living conditions.

In addition to poor living conditions when they visited, participants portrayed seeing who lived in the city as a deterrent to return. Four participants described post-Katrina New Orleans as a “ghost town”. Joseph Johnson attempted to return in October 2005, but described the emptiness and lack of people as a living nightmare:

“If I was to be put back in New Orleans now, it would just feel like I’m in Houston a little bit because ...none of my family’s there. ...The people were the life of New Orleans. You drive through New Orleans now ...it’s so dead... I don’t want to be here. It’s like torture, ya know. It’s like, yeah, I’m home. It feels good to see my city, but then it’s like where are my people? It’s like waking up in a dream [or] a nightmare, and ...you’re the only person there. It’s like where are your people? You don’t want to be the only one. It’s like I am Legend, ya know. You’re the only one, and it’s so deserted. It’s people you don’t know and you see all these white people, all these Mexicans. Where they come from? They don’t understand what used to go on right on this corner was the start of something big and the start of something new. They don’t know what used to be right there or just, ya know what I’m saying. ...It made me feel like I want to go back, but ...I can’t. Not right now.”

Participants reported their attachment to the people and the culture of the city pulled them to return. They suggested visiting became a barrier to return because it revealed the community they missed had not recovered. Lisa Wilson described how her view of the city determined her decision to stay in Houston:

“I was so connected to [New Orleans] that it hurt so bad I couldn’t heal. I had to step back just so that I could heal because I couldn’t even save myself. If everybody over there is hurt, somebody needs to get some strength. I couldn’t heal. People would cry when I go home, and I’d say stop. I can’t come back to here. I can’t see this every day.”

Nine participants described relocating to Houston as a way to live with the trauma of their homes' devastation.

Beyond the trauma of seeing the devastation, some participants delayed return because they had concerns about environmental contamination and protection. Paulette Watson stated:

“I was scared to take a bath. They said they water wasn’t right. ...I was just scared to do everything because I worked for Sewage and Water Board. They was telling us a lot of stuff was contaminated here, and that’s why I was scared to come back. Because ya had to take shots, ya know, but I didn’t stay long enough to take the shot. I stayed away just because I didn’t wanna come back taking shots because why I have to take shots? Is there something wrong here that y’all not telling us?”

Although she worked as a city employee, Paulette Watson did not trust government officials to be honest about the health risks posed by the flood water. To protect her family, she delayed returning to her Algiers home. Eight other participants also described how distrust for the government pushed them to reconsider their intention to return. Edith Jones explained:

“I am disgusted at my city. I’m disgusted to no end. ...That’s probably my real reason why I say I probably won’t ever go back. I’m disgusted because who’s to say that if another hurricane comes out because clearly [since] Katrina they’ve come pretty close. All this stuff about the engineering issues with the levees, what have you really done to fix it? I’m sure you’re not breaking it

all the way down and starting from scratch, so that means what? You're patching it up here and there? Anything that's patched up sooner or later is going wear away, so if you're not doing it right, breaking it down and building it back up, you might not even waste your time putting yourself back in harm's way. It's a waste, simple as that, ...and I'm very upset how it all turned out."

After the levee failure and governmental response, participants no longer trusted the city, state, or federal government to provide environmental protection systems to keep them safe.

Participants returned to Houston when they saw the poor living conditions and lack of people in New Orleans, but they continued to visit, planning to return when conditions improved. However, participants described returning multiple times over years and finding little progress in African American neighborhoods. Shawn Jackson stated:

"I'm saying twice a year [I visited], but no because ...every time I came back I got discouraged. I'm like, what they doing? What they waiting to do to the city? And I'm like, okay, I'm gonna wait. Come back six months to a year later, and I drive around... They still ain't done shit to the city. You're discouraged. I'm like, ain't nothing here!"

Participants framed the slow pace of recovery as living in limbo. A former St. Bernard public housing resident and single mother of three, Ella Taylor explained:

"I was like I want to go home, and then every time I would visit, it was like I was in a foreign land. I didn't know anybody, and I was like, I can't bring my kids back to this. School systems was to the kaputz, and I was like, I'll just stay here in Houston. But I'll get homesick and want to go home, so we would travel all the time. I had found me another job, and when I was off, I would travel. Christmas, Thanksgiving, New Years, income tax time. . . I'm going home, ya know. I don't care who works. I'm going home. I need to go see my family. ...I would only go at the end of the year, Thanksgiving or Christmas, and then the beginning of the new year. I would go between January and February, and I would always say I want to move back home. And then when I go home, and I'm driving around and everything is still looking like the hurricane hit. You still have cars turned over. The Lower 9th Ward, where my middle daughter's grandmother lived, I go over there, and it's like it's a foreign land. But then Canal Street,

French Quarters, all that is back to up and running, but everything in the outside and the surround areas is just still damaged. ... You're driving by and you're seeing all these signs on the houses and I was like I just can't... I can't do it. I can't do it. ...But every time I would come back to Houston, I would keep chronically depressed, sick to my stomach, can't eat for a couple of days and stay locked up in my room in the dark and cry. I just wanted to go back home."

Participants described experiencing long-term instability and emotional trauma while waiting to determine if return would ever be possible.

As Ella Taylor indicated, participants viewed recovery as uneven among communities.

Dwayne Edwards suggested the uneven recovery made Houston more appealing than returning to New Orleans:

"I'm just more comfortable here. When I go to New Orleans I be wanting to come back here because it's so depressing. And it's not like it used ta [be]. It look like a third world or something. To me, it hasn't been revitalized. Only thing they care about is the French Quarters. (pause) It's thrown away. It's the French Quarter, that's the most important thing. It's the French Quarters."

The participants argued recovery efforts neglected African American neighborhoods and prioritized rebuilding tourist areas, which became a deterrent to return. Edith Jones elaborated:

"From what I've researched, the best doctors have come from Charity, but they won't even take the time to get it together. They're half doing anything except the stuff for the tourists. What's more important, your tourists or your residents? The residents bring the spirit of New Orleans that the tourists thirst to get when they come for New Orleans, when they come for Essence, when they come for Jazzfest, when they come for Mardi Gras season. That's who makes up the city. The people. But they're not rolling out their welcome mat for me to say, okay, I want to bring my child back to New Orleans and raise my daughter there."

Participants thought city leaders prioritized rebuilding tourist attractions over social institutions that African American residents needed to return. They interpreted uneven recovery as a sign

government officials intended to displace them permanently, which increased their distrust of federal and local leaders and their frustration with recovery.

Policy as a barrier to return. The final series of pushes emerged from policy decisions made during recovery. Recovery policy changed the social and physical landscape of New Orleans. As participants described recovery outcomes, the invivo code “*not what it was*” emerged that conveyed how participants viewed the city after the Hurricane Katrina. All of the participants, except the two who were teenagers in 2005, described recovery policy as a barrier to return to New Orleans. In addition to the priorities that set the pace of recovery, participants provided examples of housing, education, and assistance policies that influenced their decision-making processes. Although the content analysis argued recovery planners aimed to improve the city’s quality of life via policy change, participants viewed recovery policies as exacerbating city's flaws and deteriorating their quality of life.

In the interviews, policy emerged as the first barrier to return. Participants stated they wanted to return, but the city remained closed for weeks. Jason Bossiere explained: “*We all were expecting to go back, but we couldn’t just go back. They told us we had to wait a month before the water would drain down in order to go back and just clean our houses out and gut ‘em.*” Each participant in case three returned within 10 days of the disaster, but the National Guard only allowed Lemont Cummings to enter to access his company's losses. Raymond Davis stated:

“As I got to New Orleans, I was told I couldn’t go into the city, so I was like, ‘Well man, can I at least go to the dome and look for my daughter?’ And they were like, ‘You don’t even want to do that.’ I was told by the authorities there, ‘Even if we let you do that, the chances of you finding her are very slim to nil, and you may not want to find her right now because it may not be something you want to see.’ This is what the authorities told me, the national guard, standing across I-10 at ...Causeway. They weren’t letting anybody in unless they were National Guard or FEMA workers or something like that. ...When those authorities told me that I

couldn't go in, my initial thing was, do I just ...buck the authorities and go in? ...I'd heard all the stories of people being shot and stuff like that and I knew if that happened ...not only would I not find her, ya know, we may never be reunited."

Participants devised strategies to return but did not out of fear of violence due to media coverage that Raymond suggested emphasized lawlessness. However, Jason reported, outside the Superdome: *"Everybody was sharing. It was cool. The military came around ...threw the water off the thing like it was about to start a riot. Good thing people had common sense. They was helping each other at the time."* Jason described the beginning of a therapeutic community emerging (Fritz, 1961; Quarantelli & Dynes, 1977); however, participants argued the media ignored this narrative in favor of perpetuating stereotypes of African American residents as 'violent criminals' (Phillips et al., 2010).

Eleven participants framed housing policy as a barrier to return to New Orleans. The study included homeowners, renters, and public housing residents; as such, participants described different ways that housing policy influenced their decisions. Ella Taylor lived in public housing prior to Hurricane Katrina. Although she suffered chronic depression in Houston and wanted to return to New Orleans, Ella stated, *"We couldn't go back. We had nothing to go back to,"* referring to the decision to demolish the Saint Bernard Public Housing Development, where she had lived since her first birthday. In her interview, she described several ways that recovery policy failed to help her return. The first hurdle emerged from the decision on how to compensate and accommodate public housing residents. She described her communication with public housing officials:

"They told us that it was inhabitable, so we couldn't move back to that. If we wanted to move back to the city, we had to find some other kind of housing. ...That's all I knew. I had grew up back there. My mom moved back there in, I wanna say, '81. I had been living back there all that time, until I was 25, so that's all I knew. They sent us a letter telling us that they was going to compensate

us from them being uninhabitable, so I had to go drive down there and pick up my check, which was nine hundred dollars. It was three hundred dollars per person that lived in your home, so it was just me and my two kids, so that was 900 dollars. So I was like, compensate me? This is change. I was like, this is not a compensation. I was like, this is crazy. It was like, ya know, we're going to give you this money, and you need to find you somewhere else to live. They were like, if you would come back, you have to be on a waiting list, and the waiting list was... (pause) a lot of people, so I was like, I'll just stay where I'm at... (pause) til, ya know, everything dies down. People get settled in."

Ella showed a disconnect between how she understood her loss and how HUD defined adequate compensation. She indicated three issues with HUD's compensation policy: it did not replace the stability public housing provided low-income households; it did not help displaced residents find new housing in New Orleans; and it did not acknowledge or address hardships caused by the loss of support networks.

As federal officials chose to replace the old model of large public housing developments with mixed income communities, Ella encountered more factors that deterred her from returning with her family. She described how public housing redevelopment became an obstacle for her to return:

"They tore down the apartment complex I lived in and built this new complex, and they have all these rules. ...You can't sit with your neighbors on the porch and congregate, ya know. I was used to that. Ya know, your friends come over and sit on the porch, and we talk, and we drink and be merry. Now, if it's not you and your kids, you got the police showing up at your door like you're having a party or something. So mom's like, 'You need to move back to Columbine.' They call it Columbine Park [Columbia Parc at the Bayou District] or something. I was like, I'm not moving back there. My last little girl's daddy is a convicted felon. He can't even come visit me if he's a convicted felon. I was like, I can't move there. All these rules. People can't sleep over at your house. They have to have a pass. ...I'm not used to that. I'm used to coming home if I wanna have 10 people sleep over at my house, I can do that without having to have clearance from the front office. They

got to do a background check on you and see if you're a convicted felon or pedophile, and it's like, I can't move back to that."

In addition to changes in the built environment, Ella found redevelopment policies implemented changes in social environments by enforcing rules that: limited resident autonomy; increased state policing of how low-income households live; and did not respect local culture.

Public housing residents were not the only participants in the study who reported issues with housing recovery. Participants described housing conditions and rental prices as another hurdle to return to after the disaster. Marcus Booker and his fiancée chose to sell their flood damaged home because they were uncertain their neighborhood would recover. In December 2005, his fiancée returned to her job, and they began navigating the post-Katrina housing market as renters. Marcus described how living conditions led them to move multiple times:

"December of 05, we started living in what was one of the only places to live ...the American Can Apartments and... stayed there for maybe a month and a half, two months before we couldn't take it because the place was infested with rats; and there was nothing they could do about it. Nothing anybody could do about it, but ya know, we just couldn't take it anymore. ...So we left there and ended up finding a place to rent on General Taylor uptown. ...When we moved uptown, it was just not having your own [home]. We were accustomed to not renting anymore. So now paying what we were paying for rent was what anybody's mortgage would be, and [it] didn't really matter what kind of house you get. The rent was so high you could buy any house and have a smaller mortgage. [For a] two bedroom apartment, we was paying 1600 dollars a month and that's outrageous! Pre-Katrina, that's 7, 800 dollar property, maybe a thousand at the most, depending on the quality of it. But 16, 1800 dollars? Naw. I mean, everybody was getting robbed, but you had to have a place to live. You have to if you were working here. And then wanting to be in certain areas that you were familiar with that played a lot into it. And being in areas that were populated... We almost moved into a house that was quickly refurbished in the Gentilly area, ...but there was no lights on the street after evening time, and we were like the only people on the two block area, and it was just really uncomfortable, Really uncomfortable... so that kinda made you move around a little bit."

With housing in short supply, rent prices doubled. As Marcus found, the higher prices did not mean returning residents received a higher quality of housing. On the contrary, respondents reported living conditions deteriorated as rents increased.

Participants framed the post-Katrina housing market as one where individual households could not survive alone. Edith Jones discussed a strategy to secure affordable housing in New Orleans after the disaster:

"I go back home as often as I can. I just went back home in August. When I go home, I wish I could stay, but the housing is so (pause) oh my God and fluctuating! You have to probably have like seven or eight people living with you just to split the bills because the cost is ridiculous. I mean the congestion that has come. I have never known the Westbank to be so congested, and I've lived on the Westbank the majority of my life. It is congested. You don't have anywhere to stay. I mean, you still have people trying to get on housing programs. It's like, if you're not on housing you can't get back in the city, simple as that. You're not on housing; you won't have anywhere to stay. Nobody wants to raise their family in a house full of people. I mean after so long you get burned out being on top of each other. It's crazy. Like right now I'm in a temporary situation because we're in the process of buying a home, but this alone, staying here two weeks, being on top of each other is nerve wracking. Imagine going back home to a city, living like this for the rest of your life because the economy is just so shaken up and that greed that's still in the hearts of the city that they can't build housing where people can actually come back to go home."

Edith suggested residents had to sacrifice living conditions in order to afford the post-Katrina housing surcharge discussed in the content analysis. Six participants framed greed and corruption as preventing officials from creating policy to help low-income families return.

Seven participants also depicted FEMA trailer living conditions as a reason to stay in Houston. For instance, Lisa Wilson stated:

"Yes, we thought we were going home. We did until things started unfolding like you have to live in a formaldehyde trailer with a

baby with asthma and eczema, and the schools are not ready for you. My job was like, 'You just won an award for all this great work you've done, and you're coming back.' And I'm like, 'I don't care about the money. I'm safe. I'm alive. I'm not going to put myself in a situation to live in a formaldehyde trailer just to come back. These are the conditions you provide. It's not happening. I am healthy and I have help, real help, and I'm safe. Why would I put myself at risk? Really? So no.'"

Lisa showed how recovery policies influenced her family to make decisions that contradicted their plan to return and encouraged them to continue building a new life in Houston. Shawn Jackson, Ella Taylor, and Lemont Cummings also framed staying displaced as a better option than returning to claustrophobic and carcinogenic trailers because Houston provided better temporary housing assistance.

The interviews showed returned and displaced residents evaluated housing assistance programs in New Orleans differently. When Thomas Stevens returned to college in January 2006, he lived on campus because his pre-Katrina apartment flooded and his landlord sold the house instead of repairing it. In May, Tulane University kicked him out for nonpayment because he lost his tuition waiver when his mother lost her job and he could not afford tuition. He ended up living in a FEMA trailer with his mother and his girlfriend for two years because it was better than sleeping in his car. The FEMA trailer was intended for his mother's friend. In contrast to other participants, Thomas raised issues with eligibility requirements to participate in the program:

"We didn't own a house, so we wasn't able to get a trailer... Trailers was provided to homeowners, but we were renters, so we didn't have the benefit of being able to, well I don't want to say benefit 'cause it really wasn't a benefit, but I mean if you wasn't able to get temporary housing like some other folks were able to do, so we had to fend for a place to live."

The different perspectives indicate participants judged assistance programs based on their current housing options. Participants struggling with homelessness in New Orleans wanted

access to trailers despite the health risks. However, displaced residents saw the trailers as a step down from the housing vouchers they had in Houston and interpreted the policy as an insult.

Respondents indicated problems with the homeowner programs as well. Participants depicted the Road Home - Homeowner Assistance Program as ineffective. For example, Raymond Davis remarked: *“The Road Home was not a road home. The Road Home was a road to anywhere but home.”* Of the seven homeowners interviewed, only one participated in the Road Home program. Paulette Wilson received \$11,000 from Road Home and \$18,000 from her insurance to fix her home, which did not flood but had part of the roof cave in. She stated:

“I had got my apartment [in Houston] by that time that I had to meet with the insurance people in New Orleans. I came down here, and I met with them. They gave me the check to fix my house, but I still couldn’t fix my house because I didn’t know nobody who was going to fix it, ya know. ...Everybody was charging [a lot]. It wasn’t like they give me a whole lot of money, so I had to be careful who I trusted with my money down here. ...Most of it [was] money that I had saved, and I got it on my owns to really fix my house. They really didn’t do a whole lot.”

Paulette experienced the long wait to receive financial assistance as described in the content analysis. To rebuild, she reported homeowners needed: larger grants, trustworthy contractors, and the means to commute between Houston and New Orleans. Edith Jones suggested how the city could do better:

“Someone [needs to] take better control of the funds. Actually make an effort because like with that Road Home program...down the line you start seeing how many people were getting shammed with that. The city needs to get a better rein on who’s delegating the funds [and] what are they truly doing with those funds. They need to have someone ...to make sure that they’re doing what they say they’re going to do because they were letting all these bootleg contractors come in and take advantage of the people. I mean really, if I’m giving you all my thousands of dollars? This is all that I have. It’s not even replacing a portion of what I lost, and all I’m trying to do is rebuild my life as I knew it before Katrina. It’s like the city’s just washing their hands clean of it. ...I feel they put together a portfolio of actual certified contractors that are doing

work. ...Make the contractors work for the city. Make them go down to City Hall and fill out proper paperwork, where y'all can verify their skill set, their licensures, to make sure that they are who they say they are, and give that to the people. How hard is that? You do homework on everything else. It's not that hard to have a bunch of contractors fill out a bunch of applications and, ya know, work for your people. It's not that hard. It's not. And that way you won't have your people ...tying up City Hall with lawsuits because I'm sure you probably don't have enough judges to handle it anyway. You're letting the contractors get away with it 'cause you don't want to deal with it. You're sweeping it under the rug. It's a waste of time."

Edith provided a solution to address the gap homeowners like Paulette experienced, who needed help finding contractors on top of grants to rebuild. Participants stated the city had an obligation to protect the recipients of federal grants from contractor fraud.

Six of the seven homeowners in the study found the Road Home - Homeowner Assistance Program failed to address their needs. Cora Williams and Lemont Cummings described being ineligible because their houses did not receive much damage. Lisa Wilson and Marcus Booker sold their houses in 2005, almost two years before the program started distributing checks. Steven Bell stated another family member used his mother's name to claim Road Home funds, which left her ineligible to receive federal aid to rebuild the family home. The flooding left Raymond Davis's New Orleans East home uninhabitable, but he chose not to apply for Road Home funds. He explained:

"I think a lot of people went after the assistance programs, the Road Home type programs. I never did, you know, I never did. I just went back to work. A lot of people I guess looked at it as an opportunity to get a fresh start... We all know the fraud stories... I just never wanted to be caught up in that kinda thing. My dad and my mom have always instilled in me that 'the best way to get on your feet is to get off your butt' ...so that's kinda the approach I always take. And I never did get into ...the Road Home type programs, the government assistance programs, and fighting for different forms of assistance that were available. I never did."

Participants portrayed the Road Home - Homeowner Assistance Program as ineffective because it took too long to give grants that were too small to rebuild. Some participants stated in the midst of crisis they did not have the time or energy to fight or to wait for assistance.

A few participants suggested politicians designed programs that failed to rebuild African American neighborhoods to keep African Americans from returning to New Orleans. Lemont Cummings stated:

“If you ride through New Orleans East and the Ninth Ward, it still looks the same. There’s nothing that’s been done and basically that’s because tourists don’t go there. If tourists went there, they’d make it look better. ...I think that a big reason why they haven’t done what they could’ve done – because 7 billion dollars is a lot of money to rebuild. They still haven’t accounted for where that money is or what’s been done with it, ...and no one’s there demanding that they give account. ...They just trying to conveniently put it all aside until it dies down enough for everybody to stick their hand in it. That’s really all they’re doing, and I feel that they are doing it because they don’t want the Black population back. They don’t want them to come back, and they know if they rebuild that area they would come back. ...They don’t want them there. I think it’s all government driven to keep those people from coming back.

The whole Road Home program is nothing but an elaborate land sweep device. To get the Road Home money, you have to sign over a voluntary lean on your land or your property, which means it’s basically a loan. ...A lot of those people that took that money and bought a car or did something else with it, they lost that land. Now they didn’t have any immediate plans on fixing that land to begin with, but it’s still their land.

If you’re going to say, ‘We’re going to give you a grant to fix your land, but we’re going to put a lean on your property, so we can take it,’ what’s the purpose of that except you want the property? It’s a land grab. It’s an old style western railroad land grab buy. That’s all it is. That’s all Sante Fe Railroad did when they came through the west. ‘Look we’ll help you build your ranch. We’ll loan you the money to build your ranch. You gonna sign the lean over to us. Oh by the way, now we coming through ‘cause we own the land. We moving you off.’ It’s a land grab. That’s all it is. That’s how they got the land to build the railroad. That’s how they gonna take the land from all those people that had homes: Road

Home money. All those people are gonna find themselves homeless and the government gonna be the people putting them out, period.

Participants framed recovery as an intentional process to remove African Americans from their land that operated on multiple levels. First, they suggested uneven recovery prevented Black households from returning because their communities remained damaged. Second, participants claimed the Road Home program operated like a Trojan horse, a trap disguised as a gift, to take African American land. Third, they described documentation requirements and arbitrary rules that limited the ability of some residents to qualify for assistance. Five participants viewed these actions as deliberate moves to keep them displaced.

With assistance programs in New Orleans primarily focused on housing needs, participants reported recovery policy created barriers by the needs it failed to address, such as chronic unemployment. Lemont Cummings stated:

“At the time the only assistance to anyone was ...the Road Home..., and I didn’t have a home that was grossly affected by the storm. ...We really didn’t qualify for any of the assistance that they had that we did know was available. That was pretty much it. We were on our own.”

Each case 3 participant experienced long-term unemployment after he returned and described how few job prospects in his industry led him to relocate to Houston. Three case 2 participants chose not to return because the city lacked job opportunities for them. When asked what he needed to return to New Orleans, Raymond Davis responded:

“Work, ya know, the ability to pay for my transactional life. That’s it. That’s it. ...I’m sure if I was a carpenter or brick layer, or mason, I’d be there, but I’m not that. I am not that. I’m a technically inclined person, not a build a house person. That industry isn’t there. That’s it. If it were there, I’d be there. ...I hung on. I hung on for five years. I fought it. I fought it, and I fought it. But like I said, I hit a wall economically. I hit the wall to the point I couldn’t understand. I couldn’t see my next move. And I knew my family wasn’t [here]. I was the only one left. [Before] we had brothers, sisters, daddy, everybody living in New Orleans.

Then all of a sudden, I realize I'm by myself here. There's no immediate family for me here. Everybody's gone. Nobody's at home, ya know. There are friends that have made it home, a couple of cousins, but it wasn't my immediate circle of family that ...when I really needed somebody I knew where I could go. If I knew I needed 20 bucks for gas and I was broke, I could jump in the car and go over to my dad and grab it. That wasn't here no more. That support system, the neighborhood support system wasn't there, and it's not there now."

Participants found they needed financial assistance to cover living expenses while the economy recovered because displacement scattered the friends and family in their pre-storm social networks around the country. Raymond showed some participants needed assistance more than five years after the disaster because some industries required a decade to rebound.

The final policy change that deterred participants from returning involved changes to the educational landscape. Eight participants described the post-Katrina school system as a reason to stay displaced. Edith Jones stated:

"My niece just called me the other day and said how the schools are so swollen that they have to do a lottery for kids to go to school. A lottery? You mean to tell me my child may not have the potential to ...get a quality education because they don't have enough schools to go around? That is ridiculous. They already talk about how behind southern kids are. What is this really doing to them? They're crippling them. And then you have people that don't know any other way of life but New Orleans. They're crippled, too, especially if they're other places or if they're so stuck on the spirit of New Orleans that their children can't leave. 'My mama don't want to leave, so I can't go anywhere.' So they're stuck to live...[a] mediocre life because that's all their parents know. But now it's even worse because I can't even get a decent education. I don't get it."

Edith showed participants viewed education policy changes as a reason to stay displaced because only a limited number of students received a quality education. Cora Williams indicated staffing choices caused issues as well:

"They're trying to get these veteran teachers to just move them out, and they're bringing all these young teachers in. I mean, it's stuff

like that, you know. When is it going to stop? And you think I'm going to go there? I don't think so. I'm serious. I don't think so. I hear all these negative things. One of my prayer partners, her daughter is a teacher, and she talks about how bad it is and how they're just trying to get rid of a lot of these teachers that really care and know our children. And then they're bringing in these young people that don't really care."

Participants echoed the complaints found in the content analysis concerning the influx of young, white Teach for America teachers in a predominately African American public school system. In contrast to the sampled articles, participants framed staffing choices as an intentional and conscious effort to remove experienced African American teachers from the post-Katrina educational landscape. By indicating the importance of hiring experienced teachers invested in the community, Cora and other participants argued state officials did not change New Orleans school system to help the pre-Katrina African American community but to further disenfranchise it.

Participants described many factors that pushed them to reconsider returning to New Orleans. They indicated government treatment of residents that sheltered-in-place exacerbated their distrust in all levels of government to protect people and communities of color from environmental threats. They also described multiple ways that visiting New Orleans revealed returning to their pre-storm routine would never be possible because the people that made the city home could not return due to policies that spatially stratified recovery. In addition, some participants feared returning to contaminated environments while others stated they had to leave New Orleans to heal because of community morale. Participants also framed housing, education, and disaster assistance policies as barriers to return because they did not address all of the needs participants had.

As structural forces pushed participants to rethink living in New Orleans, opportunities in Houston pulled them to consider long-term and, for some, permanent displacement. The next

section discusses factors that encouraged participants to settle in Houston until New Orleans became recognizable again. These structural factors included disaster housing assistance and employment and education opportunities in Houston, which participants viewed as exceeding the opportunities available in New Orleans, particularly for low-income minorities.

The Land of Opportunity: Pulled to Settle in Houston

Recognizing that returning home would take longer than anticipated, participants sought temporary shelter. Of the thirteen participants that left before Hurricane Katrina, only two from each case evacuated to Houston. The others went to Baton Rouge, LA, Atlanta, GA, and small towns in Mississippi. Ten of the seventeen participants in the study made their way to Houston at different points after the disaster. Several factors pulled participants to settle in Houston. These factors included disaster assistance as well as employment and educational opportunities. The interviews showed federal assistance pulled participants to Houston, but the employment and educational opportunities they found enticed them to build new lives in the city and abandon plans to return.

Disaster assistance pulled nine participants to Houston. Of the four participants that evacuated via government assistance after New Orleans flooded, only Jason Boissiere went to a Houston shelter. Dwayne Edwards and Shawn Jackson went to Atlanta while Edith Jones found her family in Kellar, Texas. Dwayne explained how federal assistance pulled him to Houston:

“The church that we was boarded at they gave us some tickets to come on the Greyhound bus to come back to Houston...’cause they didn’t have no more finances. We were ...there for less than 2 or 3 days. But they only had so much money that FEMA had given them, so the process had speeded up, so that’s when they had said come down to Houston.”

Dwayne’s experience showed not all cities received the same amount of federal aid to temporarily house displaced residents. Participants suggested the federal government influenced

where New Orleans residents settled by how much money they provided to localities. Jason stated:

“There’s a lot of things they changed. It’s like they made it the way they wanted it to be. They forced it. ...They didn’t use the slave ships; they used the greyhounds, ya feel me? Forced the migration where they wanted you to be. So Houston was the only safe haven that could take in all those people at one time. All the apartment complexes ...were empty. They had to be for ‘em to just move all them people in there like that. So we helped Houston’s economy. President, Texas, ya know what I’m saying. He helped his state.”

Participants viewed the location of temporary housing assistance as a political decision to benefit the Texas economy as opposed to a humanitarian decision to help displaced residents find temporary housing.

Government aid was not the only assistance available in Houston. Nongovernmental and faith-based organizations as well as individual citizens also provided help to displaced residents.

6 month pregnant at the time of the disaster, Lisa Wilson stated:

“I had a book of money, and I had money in the bank, and I said, ‘Wow! Everybody from New Orleans if you get here to Texas these people are blessing you, and you don’t even know who these people are.’ But, it wasn’t everyone. It was about your spirit. You were recognized and treated accordingly.”

Participants reported private assistance was not distributed evenly. Participants who evacuated directly to Houston and stayed in shelters or hotels reported receiving more private assistance than participants that arrived in Houston later or those that stayed in private residences.

Displaced residents helped each other connect to assistance as well. Lisa Wilson stated:

“When there was time for food, I was pregnant. They’d give it to me first. But if I saw someone who was not going to be favored, ...I’d move because there was always going to be something for me. ...I was almost letting people: ‘Hurry up. You go because if I’m the last one, they’ll make room for me. Let me be last because they will find a way for me.’ Maybe it was because I was pregnant. Maybe it was because of my demeanor. I don’t know. I felt blessed. I felt like I was going to be okay, and so did my husband.”

The interviews showed participants attempted to help each other access different opportunities for assistance around Houston. They described creating phone trees, where residents that met in line for government aid at the Reliant Center notified each other as they came across private organizations, such as churches, giving out gift cards and other forms of assistance.

The interviews indicated households that matched social ideas of the deserving poor received more private aid than other participants. Katz (1989), Gordon (2002), and Moffitt (2015) suggest social ideas limit the deserving poor to those who experience hardship outside of their control, particularly women and children. Three participants reported individuals selected them over other residents at their shelter or hotel because of their children. Describing his experiences with a faith-based organization, Steven Bell stated:

“They were sponsoring the clothes give away at the hotel we was at. That’s how I found them. The ladies...took to my grandkids because my grandkids was well-mannered, ya know. They spoke well... They was obedient. They didn’t come downstairs when they was issuing things acting ugly, acting like some Black folks do, ya know. They wasn’t like that, so folks they took a liking to them, and that’s how we got to know them. They helped us out.”

Respondents reported private assistance helped them find long-term temporary housing, furnish apartments, purchase cars, and place children in exclusive private schools.

In contrast, Ella Taylor was pregnant at the time of the disaster, but she did not report receiving additional assistance from private individuals upon arriving in Houston. Lisa Wilson, who was also pregnant but evacuated to Houston before the storm, expressed: *“Everywhere I went I was first lady Michelle Obama or somebody, but she wasn’t first lady then. But I just was like, Is this what favor feels like? Because I couldn’t stop it even when I wanted to,”* whereas Ella commented:

“We went to this place off of Wayside and 610, and we had to stand in these looonnnng lines to get housing. But we had no go to person like, ya know, to help us settle with. That was it. We give

you housing. You go find somewhere to live. That's it. We didn't have like [an] advocate for us. Well, I didn't have. No one advocated for me, ya know. I didn't get assistance. I lived off my FEMA money for a very long time."

Ella evacuated with her children and her extended family to family land in Mississippi. At the end of November 2005, she relocated to Houston pulled by housing assistance, which Mississippi failed to provide. She missed the window of visibility when Houstonians sought out displaced New Orleanians. As such, she did not receive the private assistance that others found.

Long-term disaster housing assistance pulled participants to relocate to Houston, but the opportunities they found enticed them to stay long-term. Eleven participants indicated that employment opportunities in Houston exceeded those available in New Orleans. Cora Williams explained, *"I had gotten a job. It was paying more than I was making in New Orleans, but I was kind of far from where I lived. So when I found a job in the medical center, my salary jumped up like another probably \$20,000. I guess I'll stay here."* Participants of all education levels found wages in Houston to be higher than in New Orleans, which led many to stay because they could access a higher quality of life. When asked about his decision to stay in Houston although all of his family members returned to New Orleans, Dwayne Edwards commented:

"When I came to Houston after Katrina, I seen a better opportunity. A lot of people ask me, 'Well, why not come back to New Orleans?' I have no problem not going back to New Orleans. I have a better opportunity here in Houston. I have furthered my education in the construction field. ...I've been with this construction company for 5 years. I moved up from a laborer to a foreman. I've learned how to read blueprints. I got with city officials with the city of Houston, the inspectors... I got a good job. \$900 a week. Do the math. High school education. Do the math. \$900 a week. You can further your education up in the construction field. They got some people that's going to school physical therapy, paralegal, starting salary at 40, which is mine. You gotta pay that back. I don't have to pay shit back, but my income taxes. Now how you love that? You can say what you want: 'Oh, he out there working in that hot ass sun' or whatever. I know one thing. I don't have to pay no tuition back. Nowadays it doesn't

matter if you have a degree or not. You better have a job to pay your bills because a degree ain't shit no more.”

Dwayne viewed corrupt politicians as responsible for the lack of trade schools and employment opportunities for Black men in New Orleans and chose to stay where he could earn better wages on jobs that also offered career advancement opportunities.

The participants in case 3 relocated to Houston after returning because of they found limited employment opportunities in New Orleans after the disaster. Lemont Cummings explained:

“My decision to come back to Houston was simply what’s best for my family situation. ...Houston wasn’t my first choice of cities to go to. ...First choice was Atlanta. I like Atlanta. I have a lot of friends in Atlanta, but the economy in Atlanta was pretty much a mirror image of what was happening in New Orleans. And that would be like jumping from one pot on fire to another one. Next choice was actually Hawaii because that’s my favorite part of the country. But let’s be real. I’m not going on vacation, so that’s out. I did a lot of study and analysis, and Houston did have the biggest job growth, and in this economy that’s really what you have to look at: where the opportunities are. They had the best overall economy out of the states as far as how the economy is rated. The health of the city itself was in better condition than the other locations I was looking at, so I made it purely based on physical responsibility. My mother and my parents being here and having a support base to help me with my kids was also a factor, but it wasn’t a deciding factor. Deciding factor was having the opportunities to get my family back to a level of what they’re used to, a level of comfortability because I didn’t want them to sacrifice.”

After struggling for years to find steady employment in New Orleans, Lemont relocated to Houston in order to provide his children with the middle class lifestyle they enjoyed before Hurricane Katrina. Indicating his lack of children enabled him to move around easier, Marcus Booker also chose to relocate to Houston when his relationship ended:

“My story is that for two years, three years after Katrina and maybe even more, maybe four years. I don’t think I’ve lived in one place longer than 6 or 7 months. I was constantly constantly

moving. And I have a dog, so my dog was always constantly moving with me, too. Just trying to find a situation to be at peace, ya know, that's kinda why I moved to Houston. Let me go over here and see. I know I'll find a place to live. I know I'll find some work, and I know I can just be in one place for an extended period of time. Even if I didn't like it, I can just relax, ya know."

Houston offered stability that a devastated New Orleans could not because industries like marketing that relied on having people in the city could not bounce back until the population returned. Some participants suggested it would be seven to ten years before some professional industries rebounded, which caused some New Orleans companies to relocate to Houston.

Individuals in case 3 often moved back and forth pushed and pulled, buffered by the need for stability. Raymond Davis relocated to Houston in 2010, five years after he returned to New Orleans to work as a FEMA inspector. The previous section described the economic situation that pushed him to leave New Orleans. In 2011, he described the mental anguish he experienced having to leave the city he loved and called home. In 2016, he described the importance of the job he found in Houston to his personal recovery:

"By getting with Verizon ...it kinda took the financial burdens away. Not so much the mental scars, but the financial scars, and the financial burden. . . . Knowing that I could pay some bills, knowing that I could buy myself a new pair of jeans, ya know, when I felt like it, I guess that allows you to kinda heal mentally, too, 'cause it puts some type of normalcy back into your life."

These quotes illustrated the importance of employment opportunities for individuals and families to be able to maintain living in New Orleans after they returned. Employment emerged as important to make ends meet but also for mental health. In 2016, each participant indicated many displaced New Orleanians living in Houston still wanted to return but could not because the city continued to lack unaffordable housing and livable wages for them,

Participants showed they made decisions about where to live based on where they could find stability, not always where they wanted to live. As Steven Bell said it: *"They're where*

they're at where they can live." Barbara Davis did not want to stay in the Houston suburb where she reunited with her children after they became separated during evacuation. She explained how educational opportunities changed her mind:

"I stayed in Katy because of my children. Mainly because I wanted some senses of normalcy for them and to return to that city in the condition that it was in would've been a bad decision I thought because they wouldn't've been able to get an education. That I will say hands down. The educational system in Texas is so much more superior than New Orleans, and it afforded them the opportunity to have a good education. So I wanted that for them, and I wanted them to have a good education and to be able to have, ya know, to make some decisions that would kinda be a foot stool to their life and that was not possible in New Orleans."

Participants realized their children would be grown before New Orleans recovered. They described how some displaced residents delayed moving back because they wanted to create a stable foundation for their children. Participants thought their children would have better opportunities in life if they graduated from Houstonian schools because of the education as well as the stability and routine, which would enable them to heal.

To families with children, educational opportunities were just as important as economic opportunities in determining where they settled. Twelve participants discussed the influence of Houstonian educational opportunities on their decision making process. Cora Williams stated: *"Until I left and went somewhere else and just kind of saw that the economy is better. The school systems were better. Productivity is better. ...My eyes were open to just how bad conditions were – meaning the school systems."* Participants indicated a relationship between economic and educational opportunities. In their view, good wages allowed Houston residents to invest in their schools. More money in schools increased the resources available to students, such as individual textbooks and computer labs. The good schools enabled children to find good wages, buy nice houses, and reinvest in schools through property taxes.

Participants highlighted several differences between the education systems in Houston and New Orleans, as Lemont Cummings stated: *"Well, compared to New Orleans, it's not a comparison. That's like apples and oranges. The only thing that they have in common are that they're both fruit. The same thing here. The only thing that they have in common is that they're both schools or called schools."* Participants identified differences between the systems that included: policies on absences, built environments and amenities, as well as curriculum and instruction practices. Ella Taylor described her acceptance of Houston in terms of the educational opportunities it offered her children:

"Education. Education. That's the best thing they got for my kids. Their education school system is very, very, very good. That's probably the only reason that I am still here because the school system in New Orleans is not what it used to be and then it's worser than what it used to be. Then they got all these charter schools. ...The public school system has gone down. Ya got to either pay for education or put your kids on a waiting list to get into a charter school. Here their public school system is excellent. The schools are bigger. The teachers are more lenient with your kids. They want to teach your kids here. They want them to succeed. ...Coming from New Orleans if your kid is slow, you're just slow and considered a dummy. The teacher doesn't take the time out to know that my kid is dyslexic and sees things backwards. ...They don't take their time with your kids. But here they are adequate. They even got a phone system. If your kid doesn't show up to school, they are going to call you. And then you get ...progress reports. Every week they send them home with this paper that you have to sign off that you recognize that they did their homework, their attendance in school, and what they did for the week. If they got a smiley face or they got stars or if [my child] was acting up in school, I would know that. But in New Orleans, it was like you send your kids to school, and you're getting no feedback. ...Everything is a charter school down there now. ...I like it here for my kids. ...When everyone's finished with school, I'll probably move back. But for right now, I can't take them from what they're familiar with and move them back there [when] it's not what it was. The school system is not what it was, so I like it here for them. They got the right amount of books, and they got computer labs and a lot of technology here for them. In New Orleans it's not like that. You might get a classroom book, but you

don't get a book to come home with. Here ...their books are like ...little biddy test packets. Everybody brings a book home, and they write in that book, so it's better. They have material they can go back to and read. In New Orleans, they give you a ditto sheet, and you have to figure it out. So I'm grateful for that. I'm grateful for that."

Ella highlighted that as the education system in New Orleans pushed participants away the opportunities they found in Houstonian schools pulled them to stay until their children graduated.

Plans to return after children finished school did not always work out. Paulette Watson showed how once established some displaced residents, like her daughter, found it difficult to leave. She stated: *"She never did like it, but she got a good job. I said, you cannot come here and make that kind of money in New Orleans."* Her daughter originally planned to return after her son graduated from high school in 2012. However, Paulette encouraged her to stay in Houston to secure retirement benefits because she had already invested over ten years with her company. Paulette stressed to her daughter that at 50-years-old she did not have the work years left to start over.

For three participants, securing a better education for their children led to family separation. Paulette Watson returned with her son because she did not have anyone to raise him in Houston. After dealing with the post-Katrina school system, she sent him to live with his brother until he graduated, *"because he couldn't never finish down here, because it was just a mess. So he went to California and he finished school in California."* When Steven Bell returned to rebuild the family home, his family stayed in Houston. He stated:

"The education system was much better than it was in New Orleans, so it gave my granddaughter a chance to really excel where she can be somebody. Down here the school system was ...horrible, ...so I'm glad she's in Houston. I really am. I miss her, but I'm glad she's in Houston, so she can succeed. Here she wouldn't succeed. She wouldn't."

The narratives showed families had to split up in order to meet everyone's needs after the disaster because opportunities varied by location. Participants also indicated that the opportunities in Houston did not apply to everyone. Although some participants found better opportunities in Houston, not every participant did, as Marcus described: "*My situation in Houston hasn't been, 'Oh, I've found the pot of gold. I'ma stay here.'*"

Houston appeared as the land of opportunity for many displaced New Orleanians. The federal assistance coupled with the booming job market and the superior educational opportunities led participants to stay for longer than some originally desired. Although these factors pulled participants to establish new lives in Houston, other factors pushed participants to leave Houston. Just as culture was a big pull to New Orleans it was a huge push from Houston. Participants described cultural differences and discrimination as reasons to leave despite the better opportunities they perceived existed in the Houston. These will be discussed in the last section.

Culture Shock: Pushed from Houston

Participants found structural forces encouraged them to settle in Houston, but many encountered obstacles that made it difficult to establish new lives. Although opportunities for disaster assistance, employment, and education pulled participants to stay, participants stated some aspects of life in Houston pushed them to return to New Orleans. Fifteen participants reported cultural differences between New Orleans and Houston pushed displaced residents to leave Texas. Respondents portrayed cultural differences between the cities as increasing the difficulty of starting over in Houston. These differences included the size as well as the work and leisure culture of Houston. They also described encountering discriminatory attitudes and

treatment in Houston, which made them want to leave. In their perspective, some Houston residents treated displaced survivors poorly because of social stereotypes.

The size of Houston emerged as the first cultural barrier that encouraged some participants to return to New Orleans. Six participants found size differences between New Orleans and Houston made acclimating difficult and reported getting lost frequently. Jason Boissiere explained:

“To me it wasn’t really that bad ‘cause, ya know, I’m young. I can start over, but [my parents] it was hard. They had to get back because ...they just wasn’t going nowhere, ya know. That’s not normal, ya know what I’m saying. They normally get out. It was just the part of it being so big out here versus the size of New Orleans, ya know. It take 30 minutes to drive to the store out here. In New Orleans you can walk to the store and it be that easy.”

Participants stated living in Houston required owning a car in contrast to New Orleans, which they portrayed as having a walking culture. Respondents reported Houston drivers had a different driving style, which made it harder for some older residents, who stopped driving in Houston, to maintain their independence while displaced.

Participants reported the Houston school system had different requirements, which emerged as a second cultural barrier. Some participants found Houston schools did not accept all of the credits students earned in New Orleans. Paulette Watson and Ella Taylor had their children held back two grade levels. Ms. Taylor stated:

“My oldest daughter, she had to repeat kindergarten, and she had to repeat first grade because she wasn’t reading on their level. She’s in the fifth grade now, and she’s doing better, but she’s supposed to be in the 7th grade... I think that’s kinda like taking a toll on her because she’s older than the majority of her 5th grade class.”

Ella acknowledged being held back was better for her daughter’s education, but it had a negative impact on her emotionally and mentally. In her follow-up interview, Ella stated that her oldest

daughter had a mental breakdown in 2014 when she was fourteen, and doctors diagnosed her as bi-polar. She framed the breakdown as the culmination of all the stress displacement placed on her daughter, which included raising her younger sisters.

Paulette found her son held back by technicalities rather than performance issues. Before the storm, her son attended a private school that did not require students to take standardized tests for grade advancement. She stated:

“It was a mess just trying to get him in school. . . . Whatever that test they was giving you like in 9th grade and 10th grade, you didn’t take it in private school, but you had to take it there. ...Although he was in 11th grade, they wanted to put him back in 9th grade. Even when I came back here [to New Orleans], they wanted to put him in 9th grade, so he didn’t finish school here. He went to California and finished school up there where they put him in 11th grade.”

This example showed for some participants returning to New Orleans did not fix their problems. Instead, they had to devise new strategies and living arrangements to meet their needs.

One participant described similar difficulties transferring college credits to Houston. Edith Jones attended Delgado Community College for nursing before Hurricane Katrina. She attempted to continue her education in Houston but found her credits would not transfer:

“I was going to school for nursing. The college would not accept my credits. ...They changed the course work by maybe one or two codings, where the number didn’t match up. It’s the exact same course, but you wouldn’t accept my credits, and I’ve already taken these courses, so had to start all over. So what I wind up doing was going to ...a school right over here on Forum Place called Sanfaron College. Went there just to do something in the medical field because I felt like my credits were being wasted. I recently, ...two years ago, went back to college and I have my associate’s in communications because again some kind of [way] they accepted my credits. There was no issue of ‘they are not valid credits. This doesn’t matter. It’s not the same,’ so hopefully by next year I’ll have my bachelor’s in technology.”

Edith's experience showed participants found some barriers that existed immediately after the disaster dissipated a few years later with no explanation. However, she lost time and switched career paths as a result. During her follow-up interview, she stated she returned to school after completing a bachelor's in business communication because it wasn't what she wanted to do. She earned a degree in mortuary science in June 2015 and planned to open her own funeral home after becoming state licensed.

In addition the size of Houston educational differences, participants indicated their leisure culture caused friction with Houston police. Shawn Jackson stated:

“New Orleans people love to be outside. Love to be outside. On your porch, on your balcony, sitting outside the gate, or whatever, and I guess they wasn't used to that... too many thousand people down there, standing outside, hanging out, drinking beers, smoking cigarettes, just congregate or whatever. Oh, they used to roll up like (whoa) ‘All y'all, hands on the gate. Let me see your ID. Oh, you're from New Orleans. Oh, you're from New Orleans.’ Well, everybody out here from New Orleans. Okay. ‘Anything on you?’ ‘No.’ But that happened constantly, constantly. All the time because they wasn't never used to seeing that many [people]. We already invaded they city. They say, ‘Y'all invaded our city. Now y'all wanna be outside all the time.’ Well, we have secondlines, parades. We outside people. ...After maybe a couple of years pass, they kinda slowed down maybe because the people left ...but yeah they police used to harass us all the time.”

Shawn suggested cultural differences made displaced residents targets for police harassment in Houston. In contrast, some participants suggested stereotypes that portrayed African Americans as criminals caused Houston police officers to target displaced residents. For example, Joseph Johnson described how police profiling caused his mother and grandfather to return to Louisiana despite relocating to Houston for temporary housing assistance:

“They didn't want to be [in] all the madness with, ya know, police profiling people. Just because you're riding around town after a certain time of night and you have a Louisiana license plate, you getting pulled over and harassed. [The police] trying to bust criminals and everything else. ...They didn't want to be in the

middle of all that, ya know. My grandfather's old, and he was a lot slower than he had been moving before [Hurricane Katrina], so eventually she moved back to Lafayette and stayed there. That's where she's at today."

Participants reported Houston police and news outlets blamed displaced residents in any dispute regardless of what happened. Both Shawn and Joseph portrayed Houston police as targeting displaced residents, but they made sense of it differently. Shawn depicted the Houston police as overwhelmed by cultural preferences. Joseph argued police targeted displaced residents because of racial stereotypes, which made it difficult for some residents to take advantage of long-term housing assistance in Houston.

Participants also framed the work culture in Houston as a reason for unskilled workers to return to New Orleans. Lemont Cummings stated: *"In Louisiana, all you need is a high school diploma. ...[In Houston,] you really need a college degree. You can't just have your high school diploma. The only work you gonna get with a high school diploma here is at a restaurant [or] carwash."* Participants framed the Houston job market as more technical than New Orleans and suggested unskilled displaced residents could not compete in a labor market that required credentials. Raymond Davis added:

"18 months later, ya know, the reality slaps them in the face. The gravy train is over. You're going to pay your own rent now. You're going to pay your own car. You have to pay for your own food. All of a sudden now you have a person who doesn't have skills out here trying to deal in a city where most people need skills to get some type of job. The people at that point who couldn't deal with that those are the ones that went home..."

This view contradicts the perspective that displacement created more opportunity for low-income residents. Some participants suggested low-income residents needed more than living in Houston to access better economic opportunities. They claimed they also needed the skills and credentials the new labor market required.

Several participants provided examples that contradicted the view that low-income residents did not have the educational requirements or wherewithal to access better opportunities in Houston. The last section showed Dwayne Edwards found more economic opportunity in Houston although he does not have a college degree. However, he indicated he struggled to find work: *“My first few months in Houston, I was job searching. ...Like I said when the construction came I got blessed, but I filled out applications all over.”* Dwayne had to demonstrate his commitment to the job before he could access the economic opportunity he saw in the Houston:

“At like 4 or 5 o’clock in the morning ...I would get with the superintendent of the company and the city inspector who runs the project. I would get with them and say, ‘Hey man, is there any hiring?’ and they would tell me wait. So at the present time I had my daughter with me. ...I would bring her to school and ...I would come back after 7:30. ...When they take lunch, I’d go to my apartment to take my lunch. They get off 8 or 9. I would go in at 8 or 9, but between 2 and 2:30 I would go get my daughter, so they see that I was interested.”

After they hired him, Dwayne stated he had to be a “go-getter” in order to set himself apart from stereotypes of Black men as lazy, especially in a work environment where he indicated: *“I’m the only African American on this construction job. I work with 400 Hispanics.”* His experience showed participants developed strategies to enter the Houston economy. The participants revealed some residents successfully integrated into Houston, but several reported problems that they had trouble overcoming.

Houston appeared as a land of economic opportunity, but participants encountered gatekeepers who refused to hire displaced residents. Five case 2 participants described discrimination increased the difficulty of finding a job in Houston. For example, Barbara Davis stated:

“It took me two years to find a job in Katy. ...When I interviewed for jobs if they saw New Orleans. . . I knew I’m qualified for the job. You just didn’t give me the job. One person that I interviewed

with had the courage to tell me, ‘It’s going to be hard for you to find a job because they’ve already told us not to hire people from New Orleans’, and that was at a temp agency. ...They felt like we were going to go back to New Orleans, and they were going to be in a position where they would have to find more workers anyway. That we were not going to stay in these jobs. That we were only transitional until we decided to go back to New Orleans or go elsewhere, so basically they were told not to hire people from New Orleans, and I just felt like violated. I just felt like I was judged. You didn’t even give me a chance to tell you whether I decided to stay here or even interview me really with the long term view of hiring me if I was qualified. You interviewed me only because you had to is how I felt.”

In contrast to the view that displaced residents did not have the educational requirements to take advantage of Houston’s economy, Barbara found employers chose not to invest in workers they viewed as transient. She also described the emotional toll being kept out of the Houston job market had on displaced residents:

“I’ve always been a person that worked. I’m not a person that lived off of the government or wanted to take advantage of the government like a whole lot of people were doing. I wanted to work. I wanted to be able. I’m an independent person, and I felt like I wanted my independence back, and people weren’t allowing me the opportunity to get that back.”

She suggested discrimination that blocked residents from finding jobs while displaced prolonged the disaster and increased the emotional and mental trauma they experienced, which supports Chen’s (2014) assertions in the *NYT* sample. To pay expenses not covered by disaster housing assistance and food stamps, participants reported they used their savings, social security, and the FEMA money they received to replace their material possessions when they could not find jobs.

Nine participants reported facing class discrimination and hearing disparaging comments about displaced residents. For example, Paulette Watson found waiting in line for disaster assistance she encountered negative treatment from Houston residents:

“People would say ugly things to us like, ...(higher pitched, offended tone) ‘we refugees’. I don’t stay in no third world

country. This is the south of the United States, ya know. It was...puzzling to me how people was so ignorant to that fact and [acted] like it couldn't happen to them, like: 'we taking care of y'all'. I said 'taking care of?' I mean I worked all my life... I wasn't on no food stamps and welfare. I been working all my life. My tax money paid for my own stuff, ya know. So it was kinda hard to hear people say the ugly things about you, but I didn't worry about it 'cause I knew I wasn't going to be there long and I was coming back home."

Participants stated they resented labels and comments that insinuated they were taking advantage of tax dollars without contributing to society. Marcus Booker framed the judgmental attitudes as a cultural barrier to acclimating to Houston:

"My fiancée hates Houston. She just has just just distain for it because... the feedback we would get from certain people out there wasn't really always welcoming, and that's completely not how it is down here. We welcome anybody in New Orleans, so that whole thing just really turned her off to it."

Respondents framed negative attitudes and employer bias as a barrier to stay in Houston because they compounded the difficulty of starting over by denying displaced residents stable employment.

The participants framed the cause of discrimination differently. Barbara Davis portrayed Houston employers as biased against high turnover rates, which led them to discriminate against displaced residents who intended to stay in Houston permanently. In contrast, Raymond Davis, her brother, argued media representations reinforced negative stereotypes, which led to discriminatory treatment:

"[General Honore] came down and these guys were holding guns on these people at the convention center. They were feeding them at gun point. How do you expect a person to feel when I gotta get food from you at gun point? We're on a rescue mission... This isn't Beirut, ya know, or some war zone you're in. You're rescuing people. Put your damn guns down. Ya know, the thing is that's all people saw around the country. So even people who got out ahead of Katrina and were trying to do whatever they could do here, they still had that stigmatism stuck on them. 'Oh you're from New

Orleans. You're from that murder capital. ...You're some of those wild people we saw on TV looting and running in the streets and fighting with police and shooting.' That's what we dealt with, and to say..., ya know, 'Well just go home', ya can't. Ya can't. That takes money. Ya have to have money to do that."

Raymond Davis framed discrimination as a consequence of racial stereotypes perpetuated by media outlets that portray African Americans as poor, violent criminals. Participants indicated regardless of their class Houston stereotyped displaced residents the same way.

Participants found negative stereotypes affected their experiences with educational opportunities while displaced as well. Nine participants reported difficulty attending school while displaced because of discrimination. A teenager when the disaster happened, Regina Walker stated:

"I went to bigger places, bigger schools, and that was scary too because even those kids judged, ya know. Because you came from a certain place you had to be a certain way. ...That you were poor. That you weren't smart. You obviously came from a horrible background if you lived in Louisiana. You suffered. And they tell you like really stupid jokes like, 'Oh was that you I saw on the house on the news?' And I'm like, 'No, obviously not. I'm right here, but thank you.' And they're like, 'You talk funny', and I'm like, 'I don't talk funny. I talk just like you. I use the same words.'"

Respondents emphasized children faced the same stereotypes as adults, which increased the difficulty students had adjusting to life in Houston. Barbara Davis described the problems the negative treatment caused for her teenage daughters:

"A lot of times, they were stereotyped at school. A lot of times, they were made fun of. My youngest daughter, she got in a fight at school. She got in lots of fights. ...She told me it was because of people saying mean things and treating them differently because they're from New Orleans, ya know. They called them 'refugees'. ...They would call them bad names and they would shushu about them."

As a result, some participants turned to homeschooling, so their children could complete school without experiencing daily harassment. Homeschooling emerged as a strategy that enabled

participants to take advantage of the more advanced curriculum they found in Houston without subjecting children to name-calling and judgmental attitudes. However, they did not benefit from the educational resources, such as computer labs, that pulled participants to settle in Texas in 2005.

Homeschooling was not a strategy that worked for every household in the study. Three participants described removing children from Houston schools and sending them back to Louisiana. By his 2016 interview, Steven Bell's granddaughter had left her mother and siblings in Houston and moved in with him in New Orleans. Although he still thought Houston had a better education system, Steven stated Houston teachers and students treated New Orleans students poorly, so displaced students did not receive the full benefits from access to better schools. In 2007, Josephine Davis left her aunt's house and the Houston schools behind when her mother became established in Slidell. Her father, Raymond Davis, stated: "*When I told her she was going back, ...she was happy even though it was Slidell because it was still Louisiana. It was people that she felt she had something in common with. Even though it might've been tough, ...she felt I've got my people.*" Although returning to New Orleans was out of reach for some participants, they stated returning to Louisiana brought a sense of familiarity and an end to the stigmatization they experienced in other states.

This chapter explored the forces that influenced the decision-making processes of the African American participants in the study. They stated New Orleans culture and pre-Katrina commitments to property, jobs, and college pulled them to return while disaster recovery policy decisions pushed them to settle in Houston. These decisions included the privatization of public housing and public education in New Orleans as well as the federal decision to provide vouchers for housing in Houston, TX.

Summary

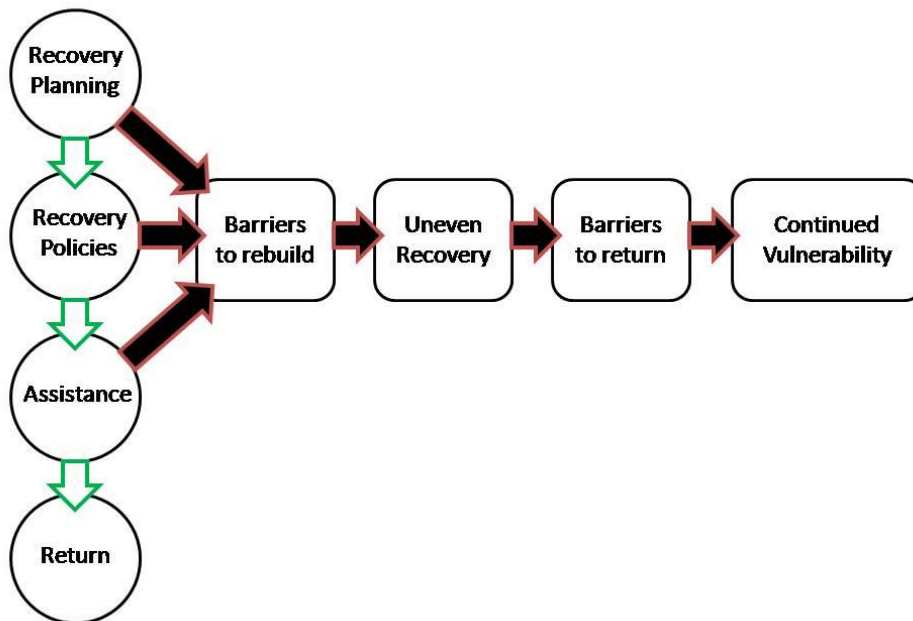
The interviews showed cultural and structural forces in New Orleans and in Houston influenced the decisions participants made after Hurricane Katrina. Cultural forces pulled participants to return to New Orleans while structural forces pushed participants to start over in Houston. At first, structural forces, such as disaster assistance, pulled participants to settle in Houston until New Orleans reopened. While displaced, participants found Houston offered better education and economic opportunities than New Orleans did, pre- or post-Katrina. However, respondents also encountered cultural differences and discrimination in Houston that made it difficult for them to access the opportunities needed to build a new life. Although culture fueled the desire to return, participants indicated they needed the means to survive, i.e. housing, schools, jobs, healthcare, and social networks, in order to return, but most participants found New Orleans recovery did not repair the social institutions in their communities, which impaired their ability to return.

Participants acknowledged the affect of cultural forces on the decisions they made after Hurricane Katrina. However, they portrayed structural forces as determining where they found the means to survive displacement, which determined where they settled. The next chapter compares the content analysis findings and the interview findings to understand similarities and differences in the way the media portrayed recovery and the way participants experienced it. It also seeks to answer the research questions while contextualizing the findings in relation to the theoretical perspectives and scholarly literature discussed previously.

Analysis

This chapter analyzes how the content analysis and interviews portrayed recovery and the process of return. The media and participants viewed recovery similarly in that it failed to rebuild African American neighborhoods and became a barrier to return for African Americans households. Both papers portrayed recovery efforts as creating gaps in assistance that compounded vulnerability and perpetuated racial and class inequalities that existed pre-Katrina. In contrast to the media, which depicted negative outcomes and the perpetuation of systemic inequality as accidental and unintentional, several participants described recovery policy as deliberately reshaping the city's demographics. After the cross-case analysis, the discussion moves to connect the findings to theoretical and scholarly literature before addressing the secondary research questions.

Figure 3: Relationship Between Content Analysis Deductive Codes



The study used thirteen deductive codes that emerged as themes in the literature review. Of the thirteen used, a relationship emerged from eight codes that formed the content analysis recovery narrative reported in the findings. The deductive codes were: recovery planning, recovery policies, assistance, barriers to rebuild, uneven recovery, barriers to return, continued vulnerability, and recovery outcomes. **Error! Reference source not found.** on page 208 illustrates the relationship between the codes, with the arrows representing the recovery outcomes code. The content analysis showed recovery planning led to recovery policies that led to the creation of assistance programs to enable return. However, the sampled articles indicated recovery planning, policy, and assistance design and implementation issues created barriers to rebuild that led to uneven recovery and barriers to return, which led to continued vulnerability.

The arrow colors in **Error! Reference source not found.** indicate the influence of race and class on recovery trajectories that the samples framed as competing narratives of recovery. Represented by the white and green arrows, the content analysis data suggested wealthier residents and white communities had more resources to respond to the disaster and received more federal aid to rebuild than poor residents or African American communities. The red and black arrows show the sampled articles claimed African Americans and poor residents ran into obstacles because of unanticipated consequences of recovery planning, policy, and assistance programs that created barriers to rebuilding African American communities. The sampled authors claimed barriers led to uneven recovery among and within communities, which operated as a barrier to return for those in neighborhoods not prioritized by recovery. The sampled articles argued the gaps in recovery planning, policy, and assistance compounded poor and African American resident vulnerability because the disaster added new problems to pre-existing issues.

Cross Case Analysis: Race, Class, and the Absence of Gender in Recovery

This section explores similarities and differences in how each perspective portrayed the influence of race and class in recovery. The *TP* sample attempted to mask racial disparities in recovery planning as a natural consequence of the disaster. In contrast, the *NYT* sample depicted racial disparities in planning as a result of local politics and power struggles. Both samples blamed federal and state policy decisions for race and class disparities in recovery. The *NYT* sample also showed the interconnectedness of government policy decisions. Although federal and state actors created the policies with discriminatory impacts, the *NYT* sample highlighted local decisions that supported and enabled federal and state plans.

In contrast to both media samples, the participants viewed race and class discrimination as intentional to keep the poor, African American households from returning. They indicated stereotypes fueled discrimination that operated on two levels: structural and interpersonal. Participants also provided unique examples of discrimination that neither newspaper sample mentioned. It should be noted that during the analysis, the participants stood out as a single group, as opposed to three distinct cases, in how they viewed recovery. The analysis showed participants made different choices about returning and continued displacement based on differences in pre-Katrina material conditions and post-Katrina needs and responsibilities.

Both sampled newspapers acknowledged race and class disparities in recovery, but each framed the narrative differently. The *TP* sample holds to the normative view that racial disparities in recovery resulted from the storm (Philips et al., 2010). The sampled articles presented the impact of the storm without its social context. The narrative went: Hurricane Katrina and the flooding damaged Black communities more so than white communities, and Black people were displaced to further areas than white people. The most damaged areas had the

slowest recovery time, which limited the ability of African Americans to return because housing in their communities remained damaged. This perspective shifted blame for damages to nature, ignoring the context of environmental racism, which places vulnerable social groups in the most environmentally risky areas (Bullard & Wright, 2012; Philips et al., 2010; Quarantelli, 2000; Wisner et al., 2004). Although one *TP* sampled article indicated conflicting desires existed between returned and displaced residents, the article framed the conflict as class based and did not mention the racial dimension of displacement.

Only one sampled *TP* article mentioned racial discrimination in the recovery planning code. The article announced the United Nations found planning to be discriminatory because of its unintentional impact and limited resident participation. By highlighting federal plans, such as public housing redevelopment, the author faulted federal decisions for racial disparities in recovery, which the author framed as unintentional. This matched the narrative that formed in the recovery policy code. In the *TP* sample recovery policy code, several examples of racial disparities in recovery emerged, such as: the Road Home program design, the public school takeover, and public housing redevelopment. The local perspective framed racial issues as the result of federal and state policy decisions. This both absolved local officials of guilt and explained racial disparities in recovery as unintended consequences.

The *NYT* sample presented a different narrative of recovery planning. It addressed racism and classism in recovery by framing it in the context of local politics and power. The narrative shifted over time from only discussing class tensions to including racial tensions as well. The *NYT* sample narrative portrayed recovery planners, the white business elite, and middle class homeowners as working together to prevent some residents from returning. The 2006 articles framed the effort as a class dispute to block the return of poor residents. One example illustrated

how homeowners petitioned the city council to deny affordable housing proposals slated for their communities. The example indicated both white and African American neighborhoods used the planning process to further NIMBY-ism and their self-interest. This masked the influence and context of race in the United States, where race and class are linked (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Over time the class-only narrative expanded to include a racial context. The five year anniversary marked the first time racial motivations entered the planning narrative in the *NYT* sample. Articles in 2010 and 2012 framed the civic engagement New Orleans celebrates as a direct result of proposals to turn African American neighborhoods into green space and deny residents the opportunity to rebuild their pre-Katrina communities. These articles argued the lack of displaced African American resident participation during the creation of these plans caused African Americans to become politically active to save their communities. However, the authors also depicted the decision to rebuild the pre-storm footprint as an error, given the large quantity of abandoned and blighted property that continued to exist years later.

By the ten year anniversary, three articles framed recovery planning as a concerted effort to keep poor, Black residents from returning. This narrative claimed the white business elite viewed recovery as the opportunity to re-establish their political power and land holdings by preventing poor and African American residents from returning to New Orleans. Although the narrative shifted overtime to include a racial analysis, it consistently framed local actors as the source of discriminatory intent to reshape the city's demographic characteristics. It should be noted the authors presented the perspective as a local narrative and framed it as a conspiracy theory by quoting local activist 'moles'. In contrast, the *TP* sample attempted to mask class and racial disparities in return and recovery as natural.

Although the *NYT* narrative gave voice to a local perspective that accused local actors of blocking the return of poor African American residents, the recovery policy code showed the sampled *NYT* authors placed blame for racial disparities in recovery on federal and state policy decisions and to a lesser degree local policy decisions. The *NYT* sample covered the same issues as the *TP* sample. Federal decisions that had discriminatory impacts included redeveloping public housing into mixed income communities with fewer units for government subsidized families. State decisions included the takeover of public education as well as closing Charity Hospital to create the University Medical Center complex. The sample indicated both state and federal decisions led to the discriminatory design and impact of the Road Home - Homeowner Assistance Program.

The *NYT* perspective also illustrated the interconnectedness of the policy decisions that had discriminatory impacts on recovery. Authors indicated the state made the decision to take over public education and create a new medical center to spur economic development and employment opportunities within the city, but the federal government funded the proposals. Additionally, local officials chose to lay off all school personnel, which disproportionately affected the African American middle class, particularly Black women, who made up the majority of public school teachers in Orleans parish before Hurricane Katrina. The federal government also funded the Road Home program, but according to the *NYT* sample, state leaders designed the discriminatory grant formula while local officials chose to prioritize homeowners over landlords. These decisions caused race and class disparities in rates of return because they delayed the creation of affordable housing for renters and low-income residents and awarded smaller rebuilding grants to homeowners in African American neighborhoods. In public housing redevelopment, the *NYT* recognized the importance of the federal shift in public housing policy,

which fueled the idea. However, the mayor and the city council supported and enabled the decision by granting permits to demolish the brick buildings in the face of local protests and demonstrations. One article in the *TP* sample also indicated the role local authorities played in public housing redevelopment. However, the overarching local narrative focused on the unsuccessful attempts of local officials to block federal and state rebuilding plans.

The participants presented a different understanding of race and class in the context of recovery than the media samples. The participants did not mention recovery planning processes. They discussed policy decisions that affected access to housing, education, employment, and healthcare in New Orleans as well as in displacement. Participants framed race and class discrimination as the root of their struggle. In their perspective, the initial response, the inequitable distribution of aid, and the slow, uneven recovery across neighborhoods happened because New Orleans was a majority African American city before the storm and government officials do not value African American lives. In the narrative that emerged from the interviews, officials chose to close public schools, public housing, and Charity Hospital to keep Black, particularly poor Black, residents from returning, and their neighborhoods continue to sit unrepaired eleven years later because officials know African Americans will return if given access to quality housing, schools, jobs, and healthcare facilities.

This narrative illustrates that participants viewed the racial and class disparities that emerged during recovery as resulting from deliberate and intentional choices by officials at all levels of government. The participant perspective is different from the media because the *TP* sample deflected blame from local to higher levels of government and framed disparities as unintended, rather than deliberate, outcomes. Similar to the participants, the *NYT* sample acknowledged the involvement of all levels of government in making decisions that hurt poor

African Americans more so than other social groups and limited their access to the decision-making table. However, the *NYT* sample shied away from participant claims that the outcomes were intentional to prevent African American communities from returning. The *NYT* sample gave voice to a local narrative of deliberate intent to keep poor residents from returning, which evolved over time to recognize those poor were specifically African American, but the sampled authors framed the perspective as more of a conspiracy theory than as the tangible reality that confronted participants after the storm.

The participants found race and class discrimination operated on two levels to compound their recovery. First, individual people acted as gatekeepers. These gatekeepers chose to close ranks and block African American residents from economic opportunities in Houston and New Orleans. This made recovery harder because displaced participants lived off the FEMA aid they received to replace their material investments (Litt et al, 2012). Although many received housing vouchers to pay their rent while displaced, the participants indicated the vouchers did not cover utility costs and the disaster food stamps did not cover their monthly food costs. The participants found they needed jobs to survive while displaced; however, gatekeepers in Houston denied them access to the job market due to racial stereotypes and fears displaced residents would return to New Orleans quickly. Three participants blamed the media for presenting negative representations of African American residents, which influenced how Houston residents received them.

In contrast to the interviews, neither newspaper sample discussed racial discrimination in the job market. The sampled articles used housing decisions to portray racial bias at the individual level. Both samples framed the debate to block affordable housing as racially motivated but highlighted how perpetrators hid behind class rhetoric, which is not a federally

protected class. The sampled articles acknowledged some residents faced financial problems because of gaps in assistance but framed financial hardship as a result of poor policy and unaffordable housing. Both media samples failed to discuss the role gatekeepers played in preventing residents from reestablishing independence through gainful employment.

All three perspectives recognized racism also operated on a systemic level to compound the vulnerability of African Americans and that return required money. The media samples and the participants viewed recovery policies as barriers to return for African American residents. The three perspectives viewed the Road Home program as marred with the same design and implementation issues. These issues resulted in racial disparities in grant awards and contributed to uneven neighborhood recovery. The participants also criticized the post-Katrina school system as privileging rich, white residents with quality schools while confining poor and minority students to the subpar Recovery School District schools. The participant narrative did not include any positive statements about post-Katrina education in New Orleans while both media samples presented competing narratives of recovery. One narrative matched the participant perspective, that the charter school movement disenfranchised African American communities and did not produce results for African American students. The other attributed improvements in educational outcomes among all demographics to the charter school movement.

The content analysis revealed little mention of gender differences or the inclusion of gender in framing the impact of the disaster and recovery. One *NYT* sampled article stated:

“Black residents, and in particular Black women, report a harder time returning and rebuilding their lives after the storm. This is in part because of a couple of hard facts: African-Americans were far more likely to have lived in a flooded part of the city, and places that were worse-hit by the flooding, such as the Lower Ninth Ward, have taken much longer to recover” (Robertson, 2015).

Robertson (2015) masked disparities as natural by not including the context of how Black women had a harder time returning. No articles framed the destruction of public housing as a women's issue although female-headed households are the largest recipients of government housing assistance. Low return rates among public housing residents after redevelopment means 80 to 90 percent of residents cannot return, which disproportionately affected Black women because they were disproportionately represented in the former residents. Coupled with pay disparities, increasing living costs for low-income families has a greater impact on female-headed households because on average they make less money than their white and/or male counterparts do.

In the interviews, the participants did not make many distinctions based on gender. Both men and women discussed the stress that resulted from caring for elderly parents and/or children with limited help. More men reported long-term separation from their children than women did. Several men framed being separated from their children as difficult but necessary because they did not want to separate their children from their mothers, who returned to New Orleans. They recognized Houston offered Black men better economic opportunities, so they accepted long-term displacement at the expense of being close to their children. Relying on women for shelter, emotional support, and income did emerge as a strategy that enabled some male and female participants to survive in New Orleans and in displacement. For example when Raymond, Lemont, Marcus, Thomas, Paulette, and Edith reported long periods of unstable employment, housing, or childcare they reported they survived via their wife's, girlfriend's, mother's, sister's, or aunt's assistance.

The mothers in Houston appeared more critical of the school system than the men, whose children returned to New Orleans with their mothers, but no participants framed school reform or

any of the recovery measures as creating gender disparities. Although, Marcus and Raymond indicated not having children, or having someone else care for his child in Raymond's case, enabled residents more flexibility in moving and choosing where to live. Raymond could not have returned for the FEMA inspector job with his daughter because he did not have stable housing in New Orleans in October 2005. Instead, the men from the club made a makeshift dorm in the third floor of their building. Raymond stated their strategy only worked because they were all men and did not need privacy.

In a public lecture in New Orleans on September 24, 2017, Crenshaw used intersectionality to reframe current social issues, and argued not framing problems that disproportionately impact women as women's issues is a systemic issue in our society. She indicated issues such as school disciplinary and push-out rates disproportionately impact Black girls more so than their white or male counterparts and that police brutality if framed as a women's issue would not only include killing innocent, unarmed people but also the high rates of sexual assault committed against women by police officers (K. Crenshaw, personal communication, 2017). In coding the articles and interviews, the gender code had the fewest statements within it. It is possible the researcher was not sensitive enough to pick up on all the ways gender emerged or was masked by the samples; however, Crenshaw (2017) suggests the absence of gender is a result of how the media and mainstream society frame social issues, which indicates the researcher's initial interpretation may be correct. Recoding may help make this issue clearer as well as conducting more research on alternative ways to frame social issues, which would make the researcher more sensitive to masked gender differences. The next section continues the discussion by highlighting how the study findings connected to the theoretical perspectives used in the study.

Theory Connections

The findings tie back to the theoretical perspectives in several ways. First, as a method to critique society, critical theorists start from contradictions in society to analyze how structural forces create different outcomes and experiences for different social groups (Bronner, 2011). The content analysis and the interviews showed a contradiction in planning for return. In the media's perspective, planners assumed a significant portion (20 to 40 percent) of the population would not return and those that did would have to be lured back by quality of life improvements. This served as one of the justifications to restructure public housing and public schools and to plan for a smaller city. The interviews offered a different perspective. Participants who evacuated prior to the flooding wanted to return and rebuild after the flooding. The findings show that culture and place attachment created a strong desire among residents to return to New Orleans. The interviews showed that participants weighed the pros and cons of returning or staying displaced, but where they could live determined where they settled. Living required housing, jobs, and schools for those with children. Things many participants found hard to come by in post-Katrina New Orleans.

Second, critical theorists are concerned with the false worldview that perpetuates the status quo (Bronner, 2011). Participants described how leaving the city shattered their pre-Katrina perspective of acceptable living standards. In Houston, they found higher wages, better schools, safer environments, more economic opportunities, and less political corruption. Although many reported chances to leave New Orleans prior to the storm, some participants described they had to be forced out of the city to understand the quality of life that existed for African Americans elsewhere. This suggests the city needed quality of life improvements. However, the changes implemented after the storm did not improve wages, educational or

economic opportunities, or provide safer environments for poor, minority residents in the perspective of the *NYT* sampled articles and the participants. They portrayed the policies as perpetuating structural inequalities and compounding vulnerability.

Third, critical theories also recognize the different perspectives individuals possess within a social group. Feminist standpoint theory assumes differences in material conditions create different perceptions of reality (Donovan, 2000; Hartsock, 1983; Hekman, 1997). The study included African American participants with different material conditions at the time of the storm, including homeowners, renters, and public housing residents. Participants also varied in their education and employment experience from service sector to professional jobs requiring advanced degrees. The different opinions on the ability to return to New Orleans reflect the class differences between respondents. Participants that rented or lived in public housing spoke of an inability to return because no housing existed for them while homeowners spoke with an assumption of return because they had to tend to their property. Renters and public housing residents, aware that they did not own their pre-Katrina residence, viewed return as outside of their control. They had to wait for landlords, college campuses, and government entities to rebuild housing for them to return. Over time, they found themselves priced out of the New Orleans rental market, which caused several participants to choose long-term displacement.

Fourth, the content analysis findings support the methodological decisions informed by feminist standpoint theory. Feminist standpoint theory views knowledge as partial and coming from different sources for the oppressor and the oppressed (Donovan, 2000; Hartsock, 1983; Hekman, 1997). The vantage point of the oppressor is limited whereas that of the oppressed is a better depiction of true social relations because they can see the contradictions between the mainstream social narrative and their experiences living in oppressed bodies (Donovan, 2000;

Hartsock, 1983; Hekman, 1997). The content analysis framed African Americans as the most impacted social group by the storm as well as by a recovery process characterized as slow and spatially uneven. The media also depicted poor residents as receiving the least benefit from policy changes implemented during recovery. This supports the methodological decision to begin examining contradictions in recovery from the African American perspective because the media portrayed African Americans as having the most obstacles to return to post-Katrina New Orleans. The media also showed the gaps in assistance that emerged for poor, minority residents that did not arise for wealthier white residents. Beginning social investigation of recovery from the perspective of African Americans may have revealed more than if the study had been conducted with white residents who did not experience the same gaps in assistance during recovery.

The Road Home program is a good example of the disparate impact recovery policy had on African American communities. The findings showed that the Road Home design and implementation created disparate impacts among Black and white communities. Officials created the discriminatory design based on the ideology that giving homeowners their house value would compensate them and return them to their pre-Katrina status. The money came with the stipulation that the residences had to be finished and lived in by the homeowner within three years. If the homeowner did not comply, the money had to be returned. The content analysis illustrated the gap this created in African American communities. Controlling for the extent of damage, residents in these communities received less aid than residents in white communities, but the officials still held African Americans responsible for rebuilding within three years although their Road Home grants alone did not provide enough money to rebuild a house.

The issues with the Road Home program tie back to critical race theory and feminist standpoint theory. The problems stemmed from the program's ahistorical and ideological nature. Officials did not ground the policy in the concrete experiences of poor communities of color. By being ahistorical, the program failed to account for the influence of racial discrimination in real estate, which depresses housing values in minority communities. Home values were too low to pay for replacing the structure without additional resources. The content analysis revealed poor homeowners did not qualify for private market loans to cover shortfalls, which averaged more than \$54,000 according to Reckdahl (2008). Rivlin (2015) showed from his experience lending to the African American community in New Orleans, Liberty Bank president, Alden McDonald recognized the design flaw long before federal judges found the program discriminated against homeowners in Black neighborhoods. This illustrated that McDonald had a better vantage point to understand the needs of his community as well as how policy decisions would affect his clientele. He foresaw the gaps that would exist in African American communities and understood that the private market would be unable to meet the needs of poor homeowners because their low wages and home values do not meet bank lending requirements.

Critical perspectives emphasize the importance of history and context. The Road Home program is an example of a top down policy decision made without considering the historical context of the housing market and without considering the experiences of those at the bottom of the social hierarchy (Bronner, 2011; Calmore, 1992/1995; Cook, 1990/1995; Crenshaw, 1988/1995; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Matsuda, 1987/1995). By failing to account for systemic discrimination in real estate, the program exacerbated housing inequality along racial lines. Critical race theorists advocate for addressing race in order to change structural racism (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Young (1990) contended

that differences between social groups needed to be recognized and that policy needed to treat them differently according to their differences. Similar to critical race theorists, Young (1990) attacked colorblind ideology as perpetuating racial discrimination and the status quo of inequality. The Road Home program attempted to treat all homeowners the same without recognizing their differences in material conditions before the storm. Critical race theorists suggest policy must explicitly address race in order to stop perpetuating structural racism and must be grounded in the lived experiences of oppressed communities (Calmore, 1992/1995; Cook, 1990/1995; Crenshaw, 1988/1995; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Matsuda, 1987/1995). Recognizing differences may have led to policy decisions that provided the difference between one's personal resources (i.e. insurance payouts, savings) and the cost to rebuild a house of similar size. Recognizing differences may also have helped alleviate contractor fraud issues by providing additional assistance to elderly or women homeowners who reported finding reliable contractors became problematic.

The findings showed the importance of social stereotypes and representations, which is a focus of representational intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw (1991) described representational intersectionality as concerned with the influence of stereotypes on policy and social institutions. The content analysis revealed the media viewed the Road Home program's complicated design as a reaction to stereotypical representations of poor, Black people. Officials viewed the recipients of the program as lazy criminals and created multiple steps to minimize fraud. The cumbersome process prioritized fraud reduction over quick and efficient distribution of rebuilding grants. Participants also described stereotypes as an obstacle while displaced. Employers judged participants based on stereotypes and refused to hire them. This made surviving in Houston more difficult because aid did not cover all household living expenses. As

such, participants described needing jobs while displaced in order to afford monthly living expenses, mortgage payments for New Orleans property, and car notes until they could return. These experiences illustrate the harmful impact stereotypes have on policy as well as on individuals.

Phillips et al. (2010) support utilizing a social vulnerability framework to understand the cause and impact of natural and technological disasters. They indicate that although scientific evidence supports the relevance of the social vulnerability framework the normative view of disasters as freak occurrences that create chaos continues to remain prevalent in mainstream media representations (2010). The findings revealed the *TP* applied the normative framework to make sense of Hurricane Katrina and the levee failure. The narrative that emerged from the *TP* sample shifted blame from local officials and planners to Hurricane Katrina, an uncontrollable weather event, which damaged some neighborhoods more so than others as discussed in the previous section.

Literature Connections & Answers to the Research Questions

This project intended to explore how African American evacuees framed obstacles to return to post-Katrina New Orleans. It sought to answer: How do these obstacles affect the decision-making process? How are these obstacles overcome? What is needed to facilitate return? How do participants frame race, class, and gender in the context of return? This section will answer these questions and situate the findings within the context of the scholarly literature on disasters and recovery.

Participants and the media identified many obstacles to return. These obstacles included recovery policies and priorities; a lack of community, housing, employment, and educational opportunities; distrust of government to protect, compensate, and treat African Americans with

respect; and racial and class discrimination. Participants framed policy and priority issues as intentionally and deliberately created by government officials to block poor, African Americans from returning to the city. Pais and Elliot (2008) described post-disaster recovery as a continuation of local development, which is subject to power struggles between unequal forces. The local growth machine transforms into the recovery machine and maintains pre-existing power relations throughout recovery (2008). In this process, the local elite use their power to ensure recovery serves their interests (2008). This is similar to the perspective of the participants and the *NYT*, which depicted local politics as a barrier to recovery planning. The participants framed the uneven recovery as the result of race and class discrimination at all levels of government (Bullard & Wright, 2012). The slow response, disparities in compensation, and changes in public housing, education, and healthcare heightened participants' distrust of the government to be honest and fair (2012).

The findings also matched the literature concerning the impact of disaster recovery policy on vulnerable communities. The media framed recovery policy as compounding the vulnerability of African Americans, and the participants reported being more vulnerable after the storm, which would be expected based on the literature (Bullard & Wright, 2012; Christopolos et al., 2010; Ingram et al., 2006; Kamel & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2004; Le Masson, 2015; Pais & Elliot, 2008). The findings agree that a framework of continued vulnerability would better suit understanding the lives of the participants (Chhotray & Few, 2012). Kamel & Loukaitou-Sideris (2004) found disparities in funding to minority communities diminished the ability of those neighborhoods to rebuild housing, which caused population loss. Participants and the media described African American communities as receiving less assistance to rebuild housing and longer wait times for schools and stores to be replaced than more affluent and whiter neighborhoods. They also

connected the lack of assistance to the blight and emptiness that continue to characterize the Lower 9th Ward and New Orleans East. The findings agree with Kamel & Loukaitou-Sideris (2004) that the lack of government assistance to rebuild minority communities reduces population because there is no housing to return to.

In addition to disruptions in housing, education, and employment, participants described themselves as more vulnerable because displacement reduced their social networks (Litt et al., 2012; Stack, 1974). Friends and family did not always end up in the same location. Those with less damage, more resources, and stable employment returned to New Orleans while those without housing, schools, or jobs after the storm lacked the means to return. Although Fussell (2012) contends that the people within a network tend to be in similar situations, Litt et al. (2012) provided examples of different networks, some with similar resources among all members and some with different resources and skills within the network. The participants showed the differences within their networks. Differences in age, housing tenure, employment opportunities, and educational needs caused some family members to return to New Orleans while others chose long-term displacement. Participants described their networks as having fewer resources and having to cover more distance to get help. They also drew attention to the depression they experienced after the storm and depicted being separated from family and friends as exacerbating their distress.

Another barrier to return that emerged from the interviews was the lack of community. The lack of community negatively affected mental health. Participants described New Orleans as the people. Without the people, the city was just a structure. To Joseph Johnson being in the city knowing all of his immediate family and most of his close friends had not returned was a nightmare akin to the movie *I Am Legend* that featured Will Smith. To Raymond Davis, it was

the last straw that caused him to relocate to Houston after living in post-Katrina New Orleans for five years. Without reliable employment, Raymond became aware he was alone in the city without the security of his family network that would have helped him through hard times had they returned. This perspective agrees with Erikson (1976), who found the loss of community prevented respondents from healing after the Buffalo Creek dam failure.

The media framed the destruction of New Orleans as a natural disaster, but it manifested more like a technological disaster. Comparing the findings to disaster literature, recovery followed the trajectory of a technological or man-made disaster. In natural disasters, community solidarity emerges to help residents heal psychologically. In technological disasters, a corrosive community develops that prevents healing. Instead, blame and the fight of compensation prolong the disaster. Picou (2009) framed Hurricane Katrina as a na-tech disaster, a hybrid disaster where a natural event causes technological failures. The findings support his perspective.

The next question asked how the obstacles affected the decision-making process of the participants. As Dynes (1974) described, participants made thoughtful/thought-out, rational decisions concerning displacement and return. The participants weighed the pros and cons of returning, staying displaced, and relocating to Houston. Case one participants returned because of pre-Katrina commitments, i.e. retirement, college, family property, or family responsibility. The middle and working class participants in case 2 and 3 chose not to return or relocated, respectively, for different reasons. Those with housing in New Orleans did not have jobs to return to. Those with jobs needed housing. Others found higher wages and better living conditions (i.e. safer environments, better schools) in Houston while recovery floundered in their communities and housing priced them out. Several participants acknowledge that residents in the Diaspora long to return, but as Regina Walker described it is a dream that they know will not

come true because that life does not exist anymore. The decision to return was not based on blind emotion. Respondents explained they lived where they could – where they could find jobs; where they could find housing; where they could find quality schools; where they could find healthcare. Participants returned when they had jobs and left when they did not. Housing was a necessity, but as Thomas Stevens stated, his car became a house once he returned to New Orleans.

Although participants described wanting to return to New Orleans, the majority in the study did not return because of the obstacles they encountered. At first, the city was closed, and participants could not return. This forced them to find accommodations elsewhere. The federal government and city of Houston worked together to provide long-term temporary housing for displaced residents. Disaster housing assistance pulled participants to settle in Houston. The aid did not cover all living expenses (i.e. utilities, car payment, New Orleans mortgage), so many participants relied on their personal savings, and NGO, employer, and/or private assistance as they searched for work and began building their lives again. As they built in Houston, they saw more obstacles emerge to life in New Orleans. The obstacles made them choose to delay returning until conditions improved. For some participants this meant an improvement in personal conditions (i.e. after graduation or retirement). Others needed changes in city conditions (i.e. contamination, affordable rents, quality schools, and employment opportunities) to return.

The findings indicated that participants choose where to live based on the intersection of their pre-Katrina commitments or situation and their post-Katrina opportunities. Opportunities varied by the industries participants worked in before the storm. For example, those with trades easy to transfer (i.e. truck driver or nurse) had an easier time finding jobs in Houston than those searching for service sector employment or those with trades that relied on an established

clientele (i.e. lawyer or barber). Opportunities also varied by the people participants met in Houston. The aid from private citizens, employers, and organizations was unequal in size and distribution. Participants who received private aid described being selected or “favored” because they met social ideas of the deserving poor (i.e. well-mannered children, pregnant, helping others, set back outside of their control, musicians) (Gordon, 2002; Katz, 1989; Moffitt, 2015). A pre-condition of this type of aid was visibility during the time Houston residents gave freely. Participants who arrived in Houston after three or four months or those who stayed with family and friends instead of hotels or shelters received assistance through their network and reported receiving less private aid.

Participants initially looked at Hurricane Katrina and the flooding as a setback, not an ending. They intended to rebuild, so life could return to normal. Over time they came to understand recovery prevented returning to what was. The built environment looked different. Different people walked the streets and called the city home. The recovery process even changed the names of schools, housing developments, and neighborhoods as leaders and developers rebranded aspects of the city, which Brash (2011) described as an important tenant of neoliberal policy.

The third question asked how participants overcame the obstacles they encountered. Social networks helped in a number of ways. They provided emotional and financial support as well as housing and childcare. Participants relied on their social networks to help them after Hurricane Katrina, but their networks had different capacities to meet the needs that arose (Elliot et al., 2010; Fussell, 2012; Litt et al., 2012). Participants expanded their networks to include strangers, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations (Desmond, 2012; Domínguez & Watkins, 2003). They made this choice because they found themselves separated from their pre-Katrina

network of friends and family. Adding Houston residents and organizations to their social networks also increased their access to resources because participants described everyone in their New Orleans network as in a similar or worse situation. Participants that did not receive private assistance in Houston struggled more to start over because federal disaster assistance programs produced gaps. Not all participants received enough private aid to cover the gaps they encountered, such as utility bills, living expenses, transportation, furniture, or employment.

Participants also used moving to overcome obstacles. In case 1, two of the five participants moved to the metro area instead of returning to Orleans Parish due to the increase in rents and the decrease in affordable housing (Kamel & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2004; Myers et al., 2008). In case 3, each participant moved to Houston as a strategy to find jobs after they experienced long-term unemployment in New Orleans. Marcus Booker and Ella Taylor described moving frequently as a strategy to deal with the emotional trauma of losing home. Moving frequently meant different things to those in different situations. Those on disaster housing assistance in Houston had yearly leases and made moves when their leases expired. In contrast, some participants in New Orleans moved every few weeks or months due to poor housing conditions and changes in employment or relationship status. In case 2, the participants moved around the Houston metro to be closer to jobs, social networks, and schools.

The participants devised strategies to overcome many of the hurdles they encountered. However, the findings revealed that not all obstacles were overcome. Some were accepted. For example, participants that returned accepted that many of their friends and family members would never return because of social conditions in the city (i.e. high rents, crime, violence, and low wages) or trauma from the storm and government response. Others, like Steven Bell,

Thomas Stevens, and Raymond Davis, continue to search for ways to rebuild their homes and their lives in New Orleans.

Participants framed life as pre- and post-Katrina. In the 2016 follow up interviews, the participants continued to live in a post-Katrina perspective. Recovery continued because things were still broken and in need of recovery. Hurricane Katrina was not a thing of the past. It was a catalytic event that still affects participants' emotional and mental health because they could not recover their pre-Katrina communities or reunite their social networks.

The final question explored what residents need to return to New Orleans. Participants offered different policy ideas that could have reduced contractor fraud or encouraged small businesses to reopen. The interviews showed the needs remained consistent between 2011 and 2016. Participants described residents need places to live, good schools for their children, livable wages, access to mental and physical healthcare, and their social networks in order to return to live in New Orleans.

The two rounds of interviews showed that in participants' view what residents needed to return stayed the same. This supports the view from the content analysis, which suggested policy compounded vulnerability. The content analysis suggested recovery policies created gaps in assistance that increased the difficulty for African Americans to return. After signs of uneven recovery emerged and activist organizations filed lawsuits, officials initiated new policies to address gaps in assistance that recreated issues instead of eliminating them.

The analysis showed similar views of recovery emerged from the content analysis and the interviews. Both portrayed recovery as uneven across and within communities due to the priorities selected by recovery leaders. Rather than improving the quality of life for low-income minorities, both perspectives viewed recovery policy as a barrier to return that compounded the

vulnerability of African American residents displaced by the disaster. Situating the findings in the context of the literature showed the findings are consistent with previous research. This suggests that although scholars are aware of the tendency for recovery policy to exacerbate social vulnerabilities the mainstream media continues to mask the impact of disasters as natural and recovery leaders continue to enact policy measures that compound vulnerability because policy design and implementation does not address or account for the influence structural oppression (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; 2001; Philips et al., 2010).

Conclusion

In the wake of the 2017 hurricane season in which three major hurricanes hit the United States in less than four weeks, the significance of Hurricane Katrina and the lessons learned from New Orleans recovery appear more important than ever. This chapter reviews the findings and analysis before discussing policy implications of the study. The section concludes by indicating study limitations and ideas to build upon in future research.

Media and African American Frameworks of Recovery

The sampled articles depicted recovery planning as a barrier to recovery in several ways. First, both samples suggested officials used flawed planning processes that limited citizen participation and allowed personal interests to influence decision-making processes. These issues led to multiple planning processes, which delayed the creation of a recovery plan. Some sampled authors suggested the slow pace of recovery planning exacerbated uncertainty and prevented private actors from investing in recovery efforts (Kroll-Smith, Baxter, & Jenkins, 2015). Second, the sampled articles showed recovery leaders shifted the goal of recovery from repairing damages to improving the city's quality of life because they assumed residents had to be lured back. The samples argued planning to improve the city overshadowed resident desires to rebuild the life they lived before the disaster as well as the need to create plans to help residents return and rebuild their communities. Third, the sampled articles provided justifications for recovery planning process failures. The authors indicated five issues that compounded the difficulty of creating a recovery plan. These justifications included uncertainty around how many residents would return; opposing resident desires over rebuilding; displacement limited resident participation in planning processes; plans depended on federal funding; and that no action

resulted after officials announced plans. The sampled articles showed the errors in the planning process led to policy decisions that increased the difficulty of returning from displacement.

Both media samples portrayed recovery policy as compounding vulnerability after the disaster. Although some authors portrayed recovery policies as successful, the samples showed policy decisions limited that success to certain segments of the population. The sampled authors provided examples that showed how design and implementation problems in housing, education, and healthcare policy affected the ability of residents to return. The sampled articles reported recovery policy produced gaps in assistance that perpetuated racial discrimination and poverty and failed to improve pre-storm conditions for poor and minority residents. The samples argued housing policies: prioritized homeowners; gave disproportional assistance to white communities; isolated renters; and increased living expenses for public housing residents. The sampled authors depicted education reform as perpetuating racial inequality by allowing the highest performing charter schools to use selective enrollment policies that privilege middle class families and white neighborhoods. The sampled articles used healthcare policy to suggest the slow pace of recovery left residents more vulnerable for years after the disaster. Together, the samples showed residents faced multiple challenges to rebuilding their lives in New Orleans, which made them more susceptible to instability and mental health issues.

The content analysis showed recovery policy contained design and implementation issues that created gaps in assistance. The participants framed these gaps as needs for which there was little or no help. The interviews showed each city offered a set of opportunities and challenges that participants experienced differently according to their life circumstances at the time of the levee failure. Culture, place attachment, and pre-Katrina socioeconomic investments pulled participants to return to New Orleans while the government response and relief to the disaster,

uneven recovery, recovery policy, and gaps in assistance pushed them to build lives elsewhere. Participants described the opposite situation existed in Houston. Federal disaster housing assistance, employment opportunities, and educational opportunities pulled participants to settle in Houston while cultural differences and discrimination pushed them to return to New Orleans. Participants reported they wanted to return but recovery glossed over providing the means to return, such as housing, employment, transportation, healthcare, and educational opportunities.

The study showed the participants and the newspaper samples had similar perspectives on recovery although respondents said they did not trust the media. Both presented recovery as uneven across neighborhoods. They also framed the design and implementation of recovery policy as a barrier to return for displaced residents. The sampled articles and the interviews framed uneven recovery as a result of recovery policy and priorities. They suggested leaders prioritized homeowners, tourists, and less damaged neighborhoods, which tended to be whiter and wealthier than heavily damaged communities. They also argued that recovery policy compounded the vulnerability of African Americans. In their view, this happened because political leaders failed to anticipate ways recovery policy would interact with race and class differences to manifest gaps and disparities in assistance.

Although both samples expressed similar views about recovery, participants recognized the influence of race and class on recovery before the media. In the sampled articles, race and class disparities emerged overtime as unintended consequences of policy decisions when authors reflected on recovery outcomes on anniversaries of Hurricane Katrina. In contrast, participants described race and class as influencing the initial response and long-term recovery. They thought government relief would arrive faster to rescue residents in an affluent city or one with fewer minority residents. They also described how being stereotyped by the media as criminals and

killers affected the way Houston residents treated them, which made adjusting to displacement more difficult for many. Rather than viewing race and class disparities as unintended as the media portrayed, many participants viewed them as deliberate strategies to keep African Americans from returning to New Orleans.

Participants understood the gaps in assistance prevented residents from rebuilding. Participants offered solutions to issues that arose, such as connecting residents to verified contractors to avoid contractor fraud. Their ability to see solutions to enable return made participants think their politicians knew what African American residents needed to return but chose not to address their needs. This disconnection between policy makers and the participants exacerbated the historic distrust between African American communities and all levels of government.

The findings showed participants needed more than housing assistance in New Orleans and in Houston. Many reported they also needed sustained financial support to cover gaps in assistance (Popkin, Turner, & Burt, 2006). Participants discussed receiving FEMA and Red Cross checks to replace their material possessions but stated that they used the money for unmet needs while displaced (Litt et al., 2012). These unmet needs included food costs, utility bills, and expenses associated with commuting between Houston and New Orleans. Participants suggested stable employment would have also alleviated these unmet needs, but many experienced protracted periods of unemployment. Some participants discussed unemployment as a result of racial discrimination in both cities. Others framed their experiences with long-term unemployment in New Orleans as a consequence of businesses and industries that needed several years to recover.

Time, Place, & Human Agency in Recovery

The study also showed that policy decisions made before and during the disaster affected recovery outcomes. The mandatory evacuation required all residents to leave New Orleans. After the flooding, officials closed the city and stopped residents from returning to find relatives or to check on property. Additionally, city leaders kept some neighborhoods closed for months, which participants described as the first barrier to return that they encountered.

A *NYT* article presented six months as the time when displaced residents would decide if they would return to New Orleans or build new lives elsewhere. The interviews showed that participants had to make decisions long before the six-month point. In fact, there was never a time when they were not making decisions. Decisions started before the disaster arrived. Networks mobilized to evacuate; those that stayed also planned and prepared (Litt, 2008; 2012). They gathered with their family in the strongest buildings to which they had access and devised strategies to reach relief when it failed to reach them. Participants could not wait six months to decide where they would live because their need for stable housing could not wait. Because they could not wait and they could not return, they had to start building lives outside of New Orleans in order to care for their families.

In exile, no participant stayed in one place for the first six months after the storm (Kroll-Smith et al., 2015). They stayed in a series of places for various lengths of times. For example, Paulette Watson stayed in a stranger's house in Mississippi for a week. Then her family traveled to Houston to stay at a friend's house with seventeen other displaced residents. She stayed for a week or so before giving her spot to her daughter and grandson and moving herself, her mother, and her 16-year-old son in with a family from her friend's church. They stayed there for three months. In January 2006, she received a disaster-housing voucher and moved into an apartment

in Houston for a year before she returned to New Orleans, where she stayed with a friend for two months until her house was finished. Additionally, all of the case three participants returned before December 2005, which was four months after the disaster. This shows they made their decision to return much sooner than the six month point. In fact, the interviews revealed participants left with the intention to return. That framework meant participants watched recovery searching for the time when return would be possible. They did not wait until March 1, 2006, to think about going home. By then it was apparent to participants that home was gone and may never return.

The study showed recovery leaders, as portrayed by the media, and participants held different assumptions after Hurricane Katrina. The sampled articles indicated planners assumed residents needed encouragement to return in the form of quality of life improvements. However, the content analysis and interviews showed residents wanted to resume the life they lived before the storm. The differences in assumptions led planners to create a self-fulfilling prophecy. The policies the media claimed leaders enacted to entice residents to return became the policies that participants identified as compounding their difficulty to return. The next section explores how competing narratives framed recovery as both a success and a failure.

Competing Narratives of Recovery

In both the content analysis and the interviews, competing narratives of recovery emerged, which showed a clear indicator of success did not emerge to evaluate recovery. This was not an oversight due to viewing recovery as a process that continues rather than as a fixed point in time. Even as a process, recovery set goals and implemented policies whose outcomes could be evaluated overtime. The findings showed contradictory narratives emerged that presented New Orleans's recovery as a success and as a failure.

The findings showed a clear way to evaluate the success of recovery efforts did not exist after Hurricane Katrina. In the *NYT*, Nossiter (2007) wrote, “*What the reports seem to suggest, taken together, is that there is no useful yardstick, and no clear indicator of whether the arrow points down or up. Signs of progress and hope in latter-day New Orleans are always accompanied by their opposites.*” Instead, the media presented two narratives of recovery. One suggested policy changes resulted in positive impacts and depicted recovery efforts as successful. The other perspective portrayed efforts as a failing to achieve their goals by indicating how recovery policy caused gaps in assistance and disparate impacts.

Each perspective provided examples to support their view of recovery. Articles pushing the success narrative provided statistics to back up their perspective, such as decreases in neighborhood poverty rates and in the number of failing schools and increases in student test scores and in racial and class diversity in redeveloped public housing complexes. The articles that viewed recovery as failing to meet its goal to improve the city’s quality of life showed the disparities that recovery boosters overlooked to create the success narrative. For example, to counter the claim that schools are better, some critics point out the lack of autonomy and loss of local control that accompanied the shift from public schools to charter schools. Other sampled articles reported that the poorest families, whose kids are typically the hardest to educate, did not return. They used this fact to argue displacement, not charter schools, raised test scores because hard to educate students that pulled averages down did not return. Still others indicated that the new school system incentivized pushing out children that could not pass standardized tests. Together, the articles showed the success narrative did not apply to all residents.

The effectiveness of post-Katrina policy changes is important because the content analysis suggested social reformers viewed New Orleans as a test case for social experiments to

improve educational attainment and life outcomes for impoverished minority students and their communities across the country. The philanthropic organizations that support charter schools hold up the city's "achievements" as proof that charter schools are better at educating disadvantaged children than traditional public schools. This fuels the move toward dismantling and privatizing public education nationwide. However, the counter narrative suggested charter schools only work for affluent, white children and systematically disenfranchise communities of color, which indicates a national shift could exacerbate, instead of decrease, poverty rates among people of color.

The media portrayed the recovery of New Orleans as an example of how to reform public institutions from housing to schools and healthcare in order to alleviate and counteract generational poverty. If these programs and policies did not work for poor and minority residents, implementing them in other communities could worsen social conditions rather than improve individual outcomes. The emphasis on New Orleans as a test case for national policy change increases the importance of understanding recovery's successes and failures. The sampled articles suggested the success of recovery depended on the vantage point of the evaluator. They reported families that received sufficient aid, either public or private, to rebuild their lives viewed recovery as successful, but residents that continue to struggle more than a decade after the disaster described recovery as a failure. One article indicated race affected how residents viewed recovery with Black residents more likely than white residents to view recovery as a failure instead of as a success. Understanding how recovery influenced different populations can help future planners and policy makers design programs capable of improving living conditions and life chances for impoverished communities of color. The next section expands the discussion of the policy implications of the research findings.

Policy Implications for Disaster Recovery in Urban Areas

The study showed the assumptions of officials that guided recovery in the content analysis did not match the desires of participants that emerged from the interviews. First, the sampled articles suggested recovery leaders assumed up to forty percent of the population would never return. They also assumed pre-storm socio-structural problems, such as concentrated poverty and poor public education outcomes, had to be addressed in order to attract residents to New Orleans. The media samples argued officials prioritized quality of life improvements over facilitating the return of displaced residents. The data showed the planners created a self-fulfilling prophecy. They assumed people would not return because they underestimated the pull of culture and home. Recovery planners did not understand the importance of cultural attachments to African Americans in New Orleans, so they could not understand why they would choose to return to a place that remained environmentally vulnerable due to federal reluctance to change environmental policy and to fund large-scale coastal redevelopment projects. The expectation that New Orleans would have difficulty repopulating led to decisions that participants identified as creating difficulties to return. Outcomes may have been different if planners had planned for everyone to return, which would have required addressing housing, income, education, and healthcare needs for a diverse populous.

Although one *NYT* article suggested policy makers had six months before residents would determine if they would return or stay displaced permanently, the interviews showed participants made several decisions about where they would live immediately after New Orleans flooded. They did not have six months to wait; they had to sleep, eat, and regain independence today. Participants stated they moved around to where they thought they could meet their household needs until the city reopened and they could rebuild. They had to begin rebuilding their lives

immediately after the storm even if they could not return to New Orleans to check on property. They needed bank accounts to cash FEMA and Red Cross checks. They needed jobs to meet mortgage payments that tended to only be deferred for two to three months. Their kids needed to be in school. Survival required participants to establish a new life in a new city because policy decisions kept New Orleans closed, in some areas for months.

The study revealed important implications for what disaster recovery should look like in urban areas. First, recovery planning should prioritize allowing all residents to return as soon as possible. This means improvements to the built environment or social infrastructure should not lengthen the time that residents are displaced. Second, residents need to be included in planning processes and should have power to influence policy design and decision-making processes, especially disadvantaged, marginalized, and/or minority residents. Policy must account for differential impacts caused by social identities linked to race, class, gender, and age in order to ensure recovery does not perpetuate pre-existing systemic inequalities.

Recovery policy must also address multiple needs simultaneously, which will require quick and adequate federal funding and support. Cities contain a diverse set of residents and each resident has a set of factors that contribute to household stability and a sense of independence. Equitable recovery requires planners to devise strategies with residents that enable all groups to rebuild at the same time. The findings suggested planners after Hurricane Katrina worked sequentially, investing first in less damaged areas. This became a barrier because participants continue to wait for investment in African American communities that experienced the worst flooding. To ensure an equitable recovery, federal dollars are required to address needs the private market cannot. This means recovery planners need to recognize the limitations of policies that rely on private market investments or loans for recovery, such as the Road Home programs

and public housing redevelopment. The study showed private market solutions are inadequate to address the needs of low-income households because they fail to qualify for private market loans based on income requirements.

Limitations

The study had several limitations that arose from design choices. First, the interview findings cannot be generalized to the larger population of displaced residents. This is in part due to the nature of qualitative work. It is also due to sampling choices. Sampling did not rely on a randomized selection, which is necessary for scientific studies to be representative of larger populations (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2007). In addition, the sample only included participants that self-identified as Black or African American that had an annual household income of less than \$200,000 before the disaster. This means the findings cannot speak to the experiences of other races or classes. To understand how the findings apply to the larger population of all residents displaced from New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina, a new study would need to be designed that included a larger sample size, applied quantitative methods, and applied random sampling techniques. Although the findings only apply to the sampled participants, they can be used as a starting point to develop a quantitative survey to test the applicability of the findings to the larger displaced population.

Time and resource constraints also caused limitations. The content analysis originally included three papers to examine a nation paper in comparison to local newspapers in New Orleans and in Houston. However, time constraints during the data analysis phase caused the articles from the Houston Chronicle to be dropped from the study before the third round of coding could be complete. Additionally, the articles from the *TP* and *NYT* could not be accessed from the same database. This caused differences in determining the population of articles that

could be chosen to form each sample. The *TP* search resulted in over 100,000 articles, which made selecting only 50 difficult. As such, the research included a few additional articles, but the project would have benefited from a larger sample size. However, the researcher did not have the time to analyze a larger sample. Time and financial constraints also forced the researcher to conduct follow-up interviews with displaced residents over the phone and to rely on a transcription service to transcribe the 2016 interviews. Phone interviews caused errors in transcripts because some calls experienced reception issues that made it difficult to decipher participant responses.

The researcher also created limitations. Due to space and time constraints, the researcher chose to limit the discussion of ways New Orleans culture operated as barriers, which included neighborhood violence and crime, party culture, and interpersonal racism. The researcher may also have not included gender issues due to a lack of sensitivity and awareness. After attending a lecture on intersectional by critical race scholar, Kimberle Crenshaw, the researcher began to wonder if the lack of gender quotes in the gross gender code represented a lack of awareness on the part of the researcher or if the samples overlooked the influence of gender in disaster recovery. With more time, another round of coding would strengthen the findings by allowing the researcher to double check gender differences. Changing the framework to compare female respondents to male respondents may also reveal new insights into how gender emerged in the interviews that the researcher overlooked initially.

The final limitation comes from the sensitive nature of the interviews. Some prospective participants did not want to revisit their experiences after the disaster. Participants stated many of their friends and family cannot talk about the storm due to the trauma they experienced. Some participants also informed the researcher they did not feel comfortable discussing some painful

moments. These moments included trauma caused when family members stole recovery funds, deaths in the family, the state of New Orleans ten years after the disaster, and disruptions in parent-child relationships due to displacement. The researcher honored requests to stop interviews as well as to move to a different line of questioning.

Future Research

Future research can expand upon the findings of this study and address limitations discussed in the previous section. The *Houston Chronicle* articles could be coded and analyzed in comparison with the existing data. All data sources could be recoded for the influence of gender. Published interviews could also be coded to see if they identify similar or additional barriers and problems as the participants. The sample could be expanded to include more interviews, articles, and media sources to further investigate how residents and the media framed challenges to return. To see how experiences vary according to social vulnerabilities, such as race, gender, class, age, ability, the sample could consist of a diverse population. In addition, the findings could be used to form a quantitative survey to test the applicability of the findings to the larger population of displaced residents.

In light of the 2017 hurricane season, future research could also compare and contrast disaster management between hurricanes: Katrina, Harvey, Irma, & Maria. Each of these storms represents unprecedented levels of damage to the communities affected. It would be interesting to see what differences existed between initial response and long-term recovery policies and to explore how residents viewed recovery in their location. The impact of Hurricane Harvey on New Orleans residents displaced to Houston would also reveal insights into similarities and differences in preparedness, relief, response, and recovery. Conducting a comparative analysis of recovery between New Orleans, Houston, the Florida Keys, and Puerto Rico may also reveal

new insights into the influence of race and class on disaster recovery, which could prove or disprove the opinions expressed by participants that suggested disaster relief and recovery would have been different if New Orleans had a richer, whiter population.

In addition, Hurricane Harvey hitting Houston almost twelve years after Hurricane Katrina raised issues of long-term vulnerability and the effectiveness of relocation strategies. The study could expand by conducting follow up interviews to understand how displaced participants understand their vulnerability in Houston after Hurricane Harvey, especially since the findings indicated the continued environmental vulnerability of New Orleans dissuaded some participants from returning. Housing displaced residents in Houston did not originate as an intentional relocation strategy; however the participants framed long-term disaster housing assistance as a structural force that influenced their decisions on where to live until New Orleans reopened.

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Appendix

Institutional Review Board Approval

University Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

University of New Orleans

Campus Correspondence

Principal Investigator: Pam Jenkins

Co-Investigator: Kim Mosby

Date: March 29, 2011

Protocol Title: “Returning Home after Katrina: Understanding the processes, barriers, and decision-making of Katrina evacuees”

IRB#: 05Mar11

The IRB has deemed that the research and procedures are compliant with the University of New Orleans and federal guidelines. The above referenced human subjects protocol has been reviewed and approved using expedited procedures (under 45 CFR 46.116(a) category (7)).

Approval is only valid for one year from the approval date.* Any changes to the procedures or protocols must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Use the IRB number listed on this letter in all future correspondence regarding this proposal.

If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Best wishes on your project!

Sincerely,

Robert D. Laird, Ph.D., Chair
UNO Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

*Updated annually

Informed Consent Agreement

University of New Orleans
2000 Lakeshore Drive
New Orleans, LA 70148
504-280-6000 | 888-514-4275

Informed Consent Agreement

Purpose of the Study

I am studying low-income African Americans' return to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. To do this, I am interviewing residents who have returned and are living in New Orleans, as well as residents who are still living in Houston, TX, but want to return to New Orleans. The purpose of the interview is to understand what evacuees have experienced.

What to Expect

If you choose to participate, we will arrange a time and place that works best for you for a face-to-face interview that will last between 60 and 90 minutes. In the interview, I will ask you to talk about the your efforts to return to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. You will not have to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable or that you do not wish to answer. After the first interview if you are willing, we may arrange another interview if we were unable to finish going through the questions. With your permission, the interviews will be recorded with an audio digital recorder as well as a video camera. You will be mailed your own DVD of all of your recordings and interview transcripts when your interviews are complete.

Compensation

You will be paid \$20 for each interview at the beginning of the interview. In the event you become uncomfortable and wish to stop the interview early or if there are questions you choose not to answer, you will still be allowed to keep the \$20.

Benefits of the Study

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. However, this study may be very beneficial for policy makers and service organizations, who will be able to use the knowledge learned from this study to make future decisions on rebuilding after disasters.

Risks

It is possible that topics may come up that may make you feel uncomfortable or that you will not wish to discuss. You will never have to discuss any topic you do not want to talk about. You can stop the interview at anytime.

Confidentiality

All recordings of you will be kept confidential. They will be stored on a password-protected hard drive. Typed transcripts of the interviews will be stored in a locked file cabinet. The researcher will be the only person to review the video footage. You can choose to be identified by your real name, first name only, or you may use another name.

Questions

If you have any questions about the study, your participation in the study, your rights as a participant in the study, or any injury that is a result of your participation in the study, please feel free to contact the researcher at any time. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Ann O'Hanlon (280-6531) at the University of New Orleans.

Agreement

_____ I know my participation in this project is voluntary. I know that I can stop at any time I want to stop. I know that I would not be penalized in any way if I decided not to participate or continue.

_____ I give permission to be audio recorded as long as the following guidelines are followed: (1) the recordings will be used only for the purpose of this project; (2) copies of the recordings will not be available to anyone outside of the project; (3) the recordings will be destroyed when the information is no longer needed for the project.

_____ I give permission to be video recorded as long as the following guidelines are followed: (1) the recordings will be used only for the purpose of this project; (2) the recordings will be destroyed when the information is no longer needed for the project; (3) I will be given a DVD of the recordings.

By signing my name, I agree that the statements have been read to me, and I understand them.

Name (Printed) _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher _____ Date _____

Compensation Form

University of New Orleans
2000 Lakeshore Drive
New Orleans, LA 70148
504-280-6000 | 888-514-4275

Returning Home after Katrina

Compensation

You will be paid \$20 for this interview at the beginning of the interview. In the event you become uncomfortable and wish to stop the interview early or if there are questions you choose not to answer, you will still keep the \$20.

Please sign and date to verify that you received compensation for this interview.

Name (Printed) _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher _____ Date _____

2011-2012 Interview Schedules

Case 1: Returned to New Orleans

Background

- Talk about your life before the storm.
- Tell me about your family.
- Tell me about where you lived before Katrina.
- Tell me about your job.
- Tell me about your biggest problems before the storm.

Evacuee

- Tell me about the week before Hurricane Katrina.
- How did you find out about the storm?
- Tell me about leaving New Orleans.
- Where did you go and how did you get there?

Life in Houston

- Tell me about your first few months in Houston.
- Tell me about any problems you had to deal with in Houston.
- Explain how you were able to solve those issues.
- Tell me about someone or some agency that helped you get settled in Houston.

Life in New Orleans

- Tell me about the first time you returned to New Orleans.
- Tell me about your decision to return to New Orleans.
- Explain to me what made it hard for you to return to New Orleans.
- Talk to me about what would have made your return to New Orleans easier.
- Tell me about someone or some agency that helped you return to New Orleans.
- Tell me about your biggest problems now that you have returned to New Orleans.

Case 2: Displaced in Houston

Background

- Talk about your life before the storm.
- Tell me about your family.
- Tell me about where you lived before Katrina.
- Tell me about how your job.
- Tell me about your biggest problems before the storm.

Evacuee

- Tell me about the week before Hurricane Katrina.
- How did you find out about the storm?
- Tell me about leaving New Orleans.
- Tell me where you went and how you got there.

Life in Houston

- Tell me about your first few months in Houston.
- Tell me about any problems you had to deal with in Houston.
- Explain how you were able to solve those issues.
- Tell me about someone or some agency that helped you get settled in Houston.

Return in New Orleans

- Tell me about the first time you returned to New Orleans.
- Explain to me what is stopping you from returning to New Orleans.
- Talk to me about what you need to be able to return to New Orleans.
- Tell me about where you can go to get help to return to New Orleans.
- Tell me about your plan to return to New Orleans.
- Tell me about how your plan to return has changed over the past 5 years.

Case 3: Returned to Houston

Background

- Talk about your life before the storm.
- Tell me about your family.
- Tell me about where you lived before Katrina.
- Tell me about your job.
- Tell me about your biggest problems before the storm.

Evacuee

- Tell me about the week before Hurricane Katrina.
- How did you find out about the storm?
- Tell me about leaving New Orleans.
- Where did you go and how did you get there?

Life in Houston the First Time

- Tell me about your first few months in Houston.
- Tell me about any problems you had to deal with in Houston.
- Explain how you were able to solve those issues.
- Tell me about someone or some agency that helped you get settled in Houston.

Life in New Orleans

- Tell me about the first time you returned to New Orleans.
- Tell me about your decision to return to New Orleans.
- Explain to me what made it hard for you to return to New Orleans.
- Talk to me about what would have made your return to New Orleans easier.
- Tell me about someone or some agency that helped you return to New Orleans.
- Tell me about your biggest problems after you returned to New Orleans.

Life in Houston Again

- Tell me about your decision to return to Houston.
- Tell me about how you ended up moving back to Houston.
- Tell me about the problems in New Orleans that made you leave.
- Tell me about your life in Houston since you returned.
- Tell me about which move was easier: to New Orleans or back to Houston.
- Describe how these moves have affected your family.

Follow-up Interview Schedule

Housing

The last time we spoke you were living.... Can you tell me about where you live now?

How long have you been living there? Do you think you'll continue to stay there for the next few years or do you think you'll be moving again soon?

I want to understand how you think of living in Houston 10 years after Hurricane Katrina. Do you still think of yourself as displaced or have your thoughts changed?

Employment

When we spoke last, you were working.... Can you tell me about where you work now?

How long have you been working there? Do you think you'll continue to stay there for the next few years or do you think you'll be looking for a new job or career in the next few years?

How much money do you make per year in this job? Is it enough to make ends meet or do you have troubles meeting your financial responsibilities each month? How do you make ends meet if you have troubles?

How does this compare to when we spoke 5 years ago? How much did you make? Was it enough to get by? How did you make ends meet if you had troubles?

How does this compare to when you lived in New Orleans? How much did you make per year? Was it enough to get by? How did you make ends meet if you had troubles?

Health

Can you tell me about your current mental and physical health?

How does this compare to your health 5 years ago?

How does this compare to your health before the storm when you lived in New Orleans?

Can you talk about any issues with depression or anxiety as a result of your experiences after Hurricane Katrina?

Can you talk about any physical health issues like high blood pressure or any other chronic illnesses you developed or that got worse as a result of your experiences after Hurricane Katrina?

Can you tell me about any addictions that you developed or that got worse as a result of your experiences after Hurricane Katrina?

Education

The last time we spoke you or your children were in school. Are you or your children still in school? What grades are they in? When do you expect to graduate?

Can you tell me about any difficulties you or your children may have with completing your education?

How does this compare to 5 years ago?

How does this compare to when you lived in New Orleans?

Additional

Have there been any major changes in your life since we spoke in 2011/2012?

Can you tell me about your biggest issues or most pressing concerns today?

New Orleans

Can you tell me about the last time you visited New Orleans? When was your visit? How did you get there? How long did you stay? Can you tell me about what you did during your visit?

Tell me about your impression of the city and the progress of recovery. How does your impression from visiting compare to the impression presented in the news?

Tell me about your thoughts on the city's recovery now that we are 10 years after the storm.

Can you tell me about issues you think city leaders need to address to improve the current conditions of the city?

In my study, I am focused on how city, state, and federal policy decisions created barriers or obstacles for African Americans to return. Can you tell me about any decisions government leaders made that made it difficult for people you know to return?

Can you give any examples of policy decisions or programs that would have helped the people you know return?

Can you think of any policies or programs government leaders could make today that would help people return?

Do you think there are still people who are displaced that would like to return to New Orleans?

Vita

Kim Mosby completed an associate's degree in liberal arts before she transferred to New York University's (NYU) Gallatin School of Individualized Study, where she studied music business, songwriting, and African Studies. At NYU, she began volunteering in post-Katrina New Orleans and coordinated the most successful Black History Month in Gallatin history under the theme: *Do you know what it means to miss New Orleans?* After earning a bachelor's degree, she relocated to New Orleans to learn grassroots community organizing from a former member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). This experience led her to pursue a master's degree in sociology from The University of New Orleans (UNO), where she explored structural race, class, and gender inequalities and disaster management. Her research on Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans recovery created an interest in urban planning and community development. After receiving her sociology degree, she won a four-year fellowship at UNO from the Louisiana Board of Regents and the Southern Region Educational Board's Doctoral Scholars Program. Dr. Mosby used the opportunity to earn a master's degree in urban and regional planning with a specialization in housing and community development in addition to a PhD in urban studies. Her research interests include: structural oppression, race, class, and gender inequality, housing and community development, disaster management, and urban planning. She can be contacted at kmosby517@gmail.com.